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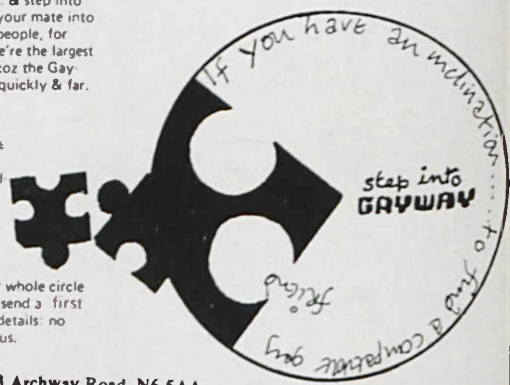
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A Thing of Beauty

Dear *Spare Rib*,

I read so often in *Spare Rib* of the problems of battered wives and of the physical and mental torture they are so often forced to endure because of their children etc. When I think of their sufferings, I think how very fortunate I am.

I am married to a person who thinks the female is a heavenly creature, who sees in the female form a thing of wonderful beauty so desirable in every way. As he puts it in his own words, a woman to him is nature's most divine creation.

My husband is a male transvestite and for this I am truly grateful for I am treated like a goddess. All because unlike many of my sisters who in similar circumstances may have gone in for a divorce, I excepted his problem and fully share his TVS activities. I can assure that in return for letting him dress and behave as a woman I lack for nothing.

I suppose a lot of my sisters will say I must be kinky. Perhaps this is so. But it's a cheap price to pay for a contented and very happy life.

In sisterhood
Sally Ashall
Cheshire

Life Long Separation

Dear *Spare Rib*,

I read with interest the story of Mary Mathurin ('Single Black Mothers and the Immigration Law', *Spare Rib* 38), and her fight to bring her child from the country of her own birth. I sympathise with her. Women don't go into "glorious" battle and win medals, their fight is long and largely ignominious – but for the women's movement.

What caught my attention here was that *life long* separation of mother and child, implicit in these immigration laws. For different reasons to Mary, I may have to face the same prospect. Chiefly because of divorce.

My husband was born in India. His violent behaviour has shown him to be irresponsible – not to mention the financial responsibility. Yet I have found that he may leave the country at any time with the child. At any time in the next 15 years if it suits him. I cannot have another child – all I want is to give this child the best life that I can.

It was I, as it was Mary Mathurin, who bore the child. That fact is not considered when officials chant – as they are wont to do – "Parents have equal rights". Is there nothing to be done?

Sincerely
Christie Macfarlane
London SW6

You Know Something's Amiss

Dear *Spare Rib*,

I've been taking *SR* for four months and at 17 think I am one of your younger readers – judging by the long words used! I have circulated copies in the school library but shocked my friends rather with full-frontal males in issue 33 ('Playmales' – a review of *Playgirl* and *Viva*).

However, I feel that you are preaching to the converted, even though this in itself is a valid aim.

You know as well as I do that for every *Spare Rib* (only one local newsagent stocks it) there are 20 fan magazines and 25 girly mags all urging on women the familiar deadly stereotypes. I realise there are difficulties, but if you want the next generation of women to have a new conception of themselves, you must speak to the young girls, who are I feel the most pressurized group in society.

When you get an intelligent girl of 17 writing an essay to prove that equality of the sexes is contrary to the laws of nature, as my friend did, you know something is amiss.

Love
Barbara
London W5

An Unborn Bunch of Cells

"I totally oppose your view that abortion liberates women", wrote J Jones of Glasgow in *Spare Rib* 37. Stating that single girls who become pregnant are being pressurised into abortions, she continued: "It seems as if we are returning to the Victorian way of thinking that the illegitimate child is an inferior being with no right to life."

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
Nobody is saying anything about being illegitimate; a child is the same child whether or not its parents are married and it is this society's ruling that illegitimacy is wrong, not *Spare Rib*'s or the whole women's movement. Married people have abortions as well as singles.

I myself (and I am married) would take this course if I accidentally became pregnant as I do not consider myself, my husband or our life ready yet to create, accept and teach another being. However, I would love to have a child when I am ready, but it would not be fair to the child itself or to us to create it at the wrong time.

All children should have rights in law (they do not at the moment!) but to give an unborn bunch of cells rights is only hypocrisy and sentiment as to what it will eventually become, and surely the feelings and mental and physical health of the already living mother, who has taken many years to grow to this stage, are of more importance? Would it not be a better thing to fight for actual living children to be free from brutal, ignorant parents and to be able to enjoy life, for they are truly conscious of it, an egg is not?

I would rather that I had been aborted in my early stages than to have maybe wrecked my mother's life and caused her to throw herself down staircases, etc., as some, indeed many, women have done in the past (especially in Victorian times, which J Jones seems to dislike) and will have to again resort to if abortion is not available.

Yours
Martine Booth
Wembley, Middx

Acting as a Service Machine

Dear *Spare Rib*,

Most of your readers will by now have heard of the National Abortion Campaign, which for the past seven months has been mobilising support against moves to restrict the 1967

Abortion Act. The James White Bill may have fallen, but the threat of restrictive legislation still exists – so the campaign must carry on stronger than ever.

What many people may not have heard of is a group which has existed for many years now; which was a major pressure group at the time of the passing of the Abortion Act in 1967, and was instrumental this year in the formation of NAC. This group is the Abortion Law Reform Association/A Woman's Right to Choose (ALRA/AWRTC). Throughout the campaign, they have worked closely with NAC, acting somewhat as a service machine, with very little recognition.

Their activities have included co-ordinating the petition (over 200,000 signatures have so far been collected), and the publication of three nationally distributed pamphlets ("Why we must fight", Action Guide, and "How much choice have we got?"). They also continue to compile and publish other facts and statistics relevant to the abortion issue.

However, AWRTC is now in serious financial straits. Because of this, one of their two full time workers may have to leave – as it is they are desperately overworked. They may also be unable to publish new pamphlets and posters crucial to the campaign. Needless to say, the campaign in general will be severely hindered by any rundown in the activities of AWRTC. AWRTC exists solely on donations and subscriptions and the sales of their literature. Therefore, on their behalf, we are appealing to you to subscribe (£2.50/yr for membership) and/or donate to the campaign. They may be contacted at 186 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1. Tel. 01-278 4575.

Yours sincerely
Eileen Fairweather
Nina Streich
London W3

Better to Just Insure

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

Having written before to you with my various worries – I am wondering if you'd be interested in my latest one. About four years ago I applied to Commercial Union Insurance to insure my life – making my two children beneficiaries if I died. The reasons for this were a) I didn't want my husband to get the money, as he was irresponsible, b) I looked forward to the security of this money if I needed it.

Some weeks ago I decided to stop paying the monthly payments and withdraw the cash – mainly because I am more secure financially. I sent the policy up instructing the company what to do – however I find I cannot have the money until both children are 18. I do not mind this and left the policy with Commercial Union.

Imagine my fury a few days ago when I received a letter from the head office demanding a signature from my husband – or the money would not be forthcoming when the children were 18. I phoned up saying that I had paid all the instalments and the children were beneficiaries. Why did they want his signature?

I am not parted from my husband and wonder what would happen if I

was. I am still refusing to get him to sign and stand to lose the money.

So please tell *Spare Rib* readers – if you are thinking of insuring your life with your children as beneficiaries DON'T. You are better to just insure and then make a will leaving it to them (this was told me by C&U after I'd fixed this up!!)

Yours
Nancy Jones
Gt Billing
Northants

Mean Husbands – A Solution?

Dear *Spare Rib*,

I am a single girl and for some time now have been concerned with Mean Husbands (I don't know why). I don't mean poor families as such, but those in which the income is probably adequate or even above average, but where the wife, usually with small children, does not know how much her husband earns or his net income, and is given very little.

Along with Battered Wives, this really makes my blood boil! We have organisations to help these women as well as equal pay but nothing, as far as I can see to ensure that (a) a wife knows how much her husband earns, (b) some form of help in getting a 'fair' amount (I don't really think you can do this, as every family has a different way of life), and (c) the idea to be encouraged that the money is not the husband's alone, but like the house and worldly goods, should belong to both.

I think it does morally, and should legally too. A husband who has plenty to spend on his own amusements while his wife literally has to count every penny is little better than a criminal.

I don't know what to do and I would like to know what attention, if any, your magazine has given to this and what can be done. Of course, I also believe in being fair to men, as some women would bleed a man white if they could. Everything a woman earns should also be regarded as belonging to the family.

I don't know if you keep a book of press cuttings, but Joan Bakewell in *The Times* of April 30 1975 put it very well. Also an MP, Mr Hugh Dykes, also planned to have a Private Member's Bill passed which would ensure that husbands told their wives of their earnings. I don't know what has happened to that.

In some cases, I would even suggest that the firm the husband works for should pay the wife the money direct, and if possible, some help should be given to help her spend the money direct, and if possible, some help should be given to help her spend it properly. This sounds Utopian. Short of going on strike or leaving a man to look after the children for a few days (and an increasing number of women do leave their children now) I wonder what women can do.

Yours faithfully
Rachel Marks
London SE14

Give Yourself a Treat

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

I feel sorry for Jill from Dumbarton ('Abandoned', Letters, *Spare Rib* 37). I am a single liberated woman and I know how to cope. It's just that

there isn't time enough. Jill is either one of these spineless married women who leaves all the decision making to her man or she is having a spoof at the expense of her married friends.

1) You may not be able to drive, Jill, but you could take the laundry to the launderette in a rucksack or one of those shoppers on wheels - I walk 1½ miles up a steep hill.

2) Why not get a friend to take you and the bottles back, you could have a drink together?

3) No wonder he left you, if you learnt nothing about how to give.

Where were your friends before you met three years ago? Maybe you could join a club or evening classes.

4) Be glad of the sheets unless you have a duvet. We single girls cope with paying rent and taxes even, so don't be all coy, it doesn't pay.

5) Instructions usually come on fixing record needles, or ask the shop.

6) Read Germaine Greer's book, you'll get back a sense or proportion and maybe a laugh.

Give yourself a treat, go down to Glasgow to the Women's Lib there

and meet other women in similar circumstances. If you're not independent enough to stand on your own feet after three years of living with a bloke, how the hell can you expect to be an equal partner in any kind of relationship. There has to be *give* as well as take.

Yours
Fiona
Falkirk

Not Solely for Fucking

* Dear *Spare Rib*,

I was interested in the variety of attitudes to childbirth expressed in the letters in issue 38. But I was horrified by the cheap cartoons, which presented a totally biased picture of what pregnancy and childbirth is about.

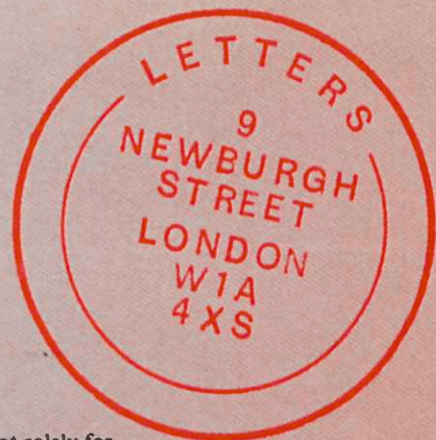
The abortion movement marches under the banner of *the right to choose* - and this must include not only a woman's right to choose childbirth but also an active discouragement of Victorian ideas that there is anything undignified, shameful or unnatural about it.

A woman's vagina is not solely for fucking, it is also a birth outlet for another human being. *Spare Rib* should be helping to break down the false prudery that objects to doctors looking up it if necessary. And if he brings students in - Christ, doctors have to learn somewhere.

If breast feeding does not give a woman fierce joy, or the pain outweighs the pleasure she can choose the alternative - but you have no

right to suggest that feeding is pain and nothing else. I daresay you could draw a cartoon of a woman having an orgasm and make her look pretty silly and sub-human.

Yours sincerely
Hilary Scannell
Oxford



Abortion: South-West Report

Dear Sisters,

We read the article 'How To Get An Abortion' in *Spare Rib* 38 by Essex Road Women's Health Group with interest, and thought it was very useful. We should like to add a few comments from our own experience in the South-West, which we feel may be different because of the variations around the country.

Where to get a pregnancy test: Some GPs are helpful, and will send pregnancy tests to the local hospital, but for some months now results locally have been taking three weeks to come back. It can be a bit quicker if you take the urine specimen to the hospital yourself, instead of leaving it at the GP's surgery, but of course not everyone knows this and anyway, not all women would be able to get to the hospital easily.

BUT there are GPs who say "It's too early to tell" and want you to come back in another month or so. Some of them lose a suspiciously high number of specimens, or lose the results, so they ask you to bring another specimen. They probably won't tell you they're anti-abortion but WATCH OUT - THESE ARE DELAYING TACTICS.

Local authority clinics in this area have pregnancy testing kits just like the ones we use at our free pregnancy testing service in Bristol, but only some of them will use them to test anyone, others will only test if a woman is having an IUD inserted or if there are medical reasons why she should not be pregnant.

The kits sold in chemists' shops are very unreliable, and we would not recommend them at all.

How to get an abortion: IN MATTERS OF REPRODUCTION, the fact that a girl is under 16 does not prevent her from giving her consent herself to an abortion. In practice however only a very few doctors would be willing to forego the parents' consent and only then

in very exceptional cases, so that it is virtually impossible for an under-16 to get an abortion without her parents' knowledge and consent.

As well as GPs, Brook Advisory Centres can, and do, refer women for NHS abortions, so if you live in an area where there is a Brook Clinic this is another avenue you can explore, if your GP is not helpful. Also, we feel that we would want to say that you can wait a few days to a few weeks for an appointment with a gynaecologist, not a few months.

Methods of abortion:

The *Morning After Pill* is used at our local Brook Advisory Centre. They monitor users very carefully, and we believe would advise termination for any woman who tried it, on whom it didn't work, and who was found to be pregnant. We don't recommend it because of the findings in the United States of vaginal cancer in the daughters of women who had been given a drug with similar properties when they were pregnant during the 50s, but feel we must point out that it is available in some areas. It has nasty side effects and can make women feel very ill for a few days, but it might be considered by some people preferable to an abortion.

Although the article said *Menstrual Extraction* is not in general use, we think that the large amount of space given to this procedure may have led readers to assume that it is widely available to women. We think it is important to re-emphasise that this is not so, and as far as we know menstrual extraction is not available at all in NHS hospitals.

The actual technique of menstrual extraction is not difficult. The most important part of the procedure is that the equipment must be not just clean, but STERILE, and anyone using the procedure needs to be trained in sterile techniques. Our group feels it would be a useful

addition to other abortion methods, but are not happy about it being used for menstrual extraction every month.

Vacuum aspiration can be done with both general and local anaesthetic as a day-care procedure. In other areas, we believe it is sometimes used with local anaesthetic on selected patients, but in our own area general anaesthetic only is used, and we think that there are many women who would prefer a general anaesthetic. It still only takes 10 to 15 minutes and you can go home the same day. This method of abortion should be used much more widely, there are only a few day-care units in NHS hospitals at the present time, and the Lane Report recommended that regions should set up more.

Later abortions:

We are finding that D&C and Saline abortions are being used much less often, and that Prostaglandins are being used more. Prostaglandins can be used extra-amniotically, i.e. inserted vaginally around the amniotic fluid, causing the uterus to contract, so that the foetus is expelled. Saline is used intra-amniotically: a needle is inserted, some of the amniotic fluid drawn off, and saline introduced. This is used much less often now because it takes about twice as long as prostaglandins and is more likely to lead to infection. Prostaglandins can be used from 12 weeks pregnancy onwards, whereas saline cannot be used until about 16 weeks. Theoretically, with prostaglandins (but not with saline) it may be possible to resuscitate the foetus.

There was a recent law suit against a doctor in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, who carried out an abortion by prostaglandin. He was not prosecuted for carrying out the abortion but for failing to try to resuscitate the foetus, and the law suit was successful (he is at present appealing to the Supreme Court). This decision in Massachusetts has

had wide repercussions outside of the United States, and for the time being few prostaglandin abortions are being carried out in our area.

Hysterotomy:

A hysterotomy has been regarded in the past as a technique for the older patient who has completed her family and in whom termination was usually combined with sterilisation. It must be stressed that there is a higher risk of mortality from abortion and sterilisation done together. We are opposed to them being done at the same time, mainly for this reason, but also because at a time when a woman needs an abortion she is very vulnerable to being pressurized into sterilisation. In spite of the fact that it means two operations, it is safer for the abortion to be performed and then for the woman to return at least three months later for sterilisation. In 1968, 26.3% of all abortions were hysterotomies, but in 1971 only 9% were (Lane Report, Vol.1, Section D, Table D4) - a trend we hope will continue.

After an abortion:

We thought the Essex Road Health Group section on this was very good, but would like to add that if you do feel a bit depressed afterwards then don't worry, you're not the only one. After all, it's bound to have been an anxious time, especially the way things are at present, and this is sure to have an effect, but it will soon pass.

What difficulties there are emphasise the importance of continuing to press for improved facilities including:

- 1) Better contraceptive methods;
- 2) Better and free pregnancy testing facilities;
- 3) Easier referral systems;
- 4) More day care units for vacuum aspiration in early pregnancy; to enable women to have the right to choose.

Yours in sisterhood
Bristol Women's Abortion and Contraception Group

SHORTLIST

events

* Events are listed chronologically.

The Journals of Anais Nin

Anais Nin's journals are being dramatised by Moving Being at the Round House, Chalk Farm Rd, London NW1 from December 2-13. It's hard to imagine how her delicate insights and individualistic pursuits can be effectively staged but an evening of acting, dancing, music, film and video may illuminate the privacy of our reading. Ticket prices from 75p to £1.95. Ring Round House Box Office for times. (Ann Scott.)

Red Ladder Theatre

Benefit to help towards establishing new base in West Yorks. See *It Makes You Sick* - a new show about health and the NHS. Also the Stepney Sisters. December 5 at 7.30 in St Pancras Assembly Rooms, St Pancras Town Hall, Kings Cross, London N1. Admission £1.

Gay Workers

A joint conference for gay social workers and probation officers, medical workers and teachers. December 6, 10-6, in the University of London Union, Malet St. Admission free.

Childbirth: Towards a More Satisfying Experience

Educational conference for workers in the health services, as well as anyone else who is interested. Speakers (including Jean Robinson from the Patients' Association and Kate Russell on the Leboyer Method of childbirth) in the morning, discussion groups in the afternoon. Two films. December 6, 10-5, in the Council Chamber, Student Union, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston Park Rd, Birmingham. Admission £1. Creche provided.

Birmingham Centre

Dance to raise money for a women's centre for Birmingham. December 6 in Digbeth Civic Hall. Ring Linda at 449 7286 for details.

"Agreeable Blunders"

Prunella Scales reads literature by and about women. One of the special events to mark International Women's Year. December 10 at 8pm in West Hill District Library, West Hill, London SW18 (01-874 1143). Admission free - tickets from the library.

Research Centre

Sylvia Barnard will talk about *Hellenistic Women Poets* on December 12 at 7/7.30. Women's Research Centre, 158 North Gower St, London NW1.

Liverpool: Week of Action

Liverpool's International Women's Year Committee is holding a week of action from December 7-14. Sunday 7: women and Ireland con-

ference 2-5. Monday 8: Red Ladder performs *A Woman's Work Is Never Done* in Speke, 7.30. Tuesday 9: Red Ladder in Liverpool 8, 8.00. Wednesday 10: Chilean folklore and dancing, lunchtime; Red Ladder in Kirby, 1.30; women in Chile meeting with film and speakers, in the university at 7.00. Thursday 11: NAC picket of Walton Hospital 4.30; Red Ladder

here to have an abortion, with the aim of making a strong influence for it to be published in Spain.

There is a great need for such a book. We feel responsible for all these women who come every day to London with unwanted pregnancies because mainly it is lack of information. As you might know the situation of birth control in Spain is very

'IT MAKES YOU SICK'

A PAINLESS PROBE INTO THE STATE OF THE NATION'S HEALTH...



music from THE STEPNEY SISTERS

at Vauxhall Community Centre 7.30. Friday 12: Red Ladder in Skelmersdale 7.30. Saturday 13: conference on women's rights with workshops on NAC, housing, unemployment, the cutbacks - in the Royal Institute 10-4; social with the Northern Women's Rockband 8.00. Sunday 14: Red Ladder at the Wirral 7.30. For more details contact the IWY Committee, 2 Belvidere Rd, Liverpool 8 or 051-207 5400.

campaigns

Birth Control

The Birth Control Campaign, which is closely linked to the Family Planning Association, has started to produce a bulletin. Its purpose is "to advance medical and sociological research in contraception, sterilisation and termination of pregnancy; to suggest projects and inquiries, and to publicise and circulate reports". The first issue of the bulletin is about legal abortion and the progress of the Select Committee on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill. Future issues will cover pregnancy testing, oral contraception, sterilisation etc. Contact the Birth Control Trust, 27-35 Mortimer St, London W1A 4QW (01-580 9360).

projects

"Our Bodies, Ourselves"

We received this letter: "I'm writing to you on behalf of a group of women, two of them doctors, that made a translation into Spanish of the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the part on contraception and abortion. As since the beginning we were told that it is impossible at the moment to publish it in Spain, we planned the book for all the Spanish women that live and work in this country, and for all those that come

bad, with very few doctors giving contraception at very high prices, and legal abortions non-available.

Our desire is to make a cheap printed edition at first, for which we need £100 for the first 500 copies. We're calling organisations and individuals to give us what they can. This book is vital for all those women that have lived and are living the hardest repression under the brutal dictatorship. Send letters or money to Concha Espinosa, 60 Welby House, Hazelville Rd, London N19."

Women and Local History

Lancashire was the first area where the family economy changed from cottage-based industry to depending on the factory system. How much did this tremendous change affect the role of women in the family?

The Suffragette Movement as we know it started in Manchester when a group of women met at Mrs Pankhurst's house in 1903 to form the Women's Social and Political Union. Why did this first wave of feminism start from up here?

A course looking at the history of Lancashire women in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Thursdays from January 15; 2.30 at the Wilmslow Guild; 7.30 at Rochdale WEA. Tutor Jill Liddington (061-273 3333 ext 79 or 246).

East End Factory Group

A group of women have been working around an East End factory for 1½ years. Most of their effort is put into producing a monthly bulletin covering factory events and women's issues. They need more women to work in the factory and to join the group. If you're interested, contact the Lesney's Women's Group, 42 Kynaston Rd, London N16 (01-249 1652).

Lesbians and Psychiatry

Manchester Lesbian Collective and

the Lesbian and Psychiatry Group have disbanded so please stop sending them letters as they can no longer help. They're sorry.

centres

Bristol

Bristol Women's Centre, 59 Lower Union St, Broadmead, Bristol 1
Phone Bristol 22760
Opening hours: Mon-Fri 10-4; Sat 2-4pm
Free pregnancy testing: Thurs 8-10 pm; Sat 10-12 noon

Bristol women's group is now in new premises in the centre of town. They aim to provide as before advice and information for all women. They act as a referral service for battered women, do free pregnancy testing, have a book service and library. They hold meetings at the centre and act as the coordinating office for the group's many activities. They will also put women from the South-West region in touch with groups in their area wherever possible, and would be happy to send them the Bristol group's newsletter. The next SW regional conference will be held in Bristol - details from centre.

They now have to pay £10 a week in rent and rates so would welcome any contributions. For the past 2 years they've been given rent-free space by Ellen Maloz and her family and want to thank her.

films

Images of Women

A short series of workshops: December 2 to discuss the paper *Images of Women* by the Women's Collective, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, B'ham 15 (available from there for 20p); December 9 to discuss an extract from John Berger's TV film *Ways of Seeing: Naked or Nude*. 6.30pm in the Boardroom, British Film Institute, 81 Dean St, London W1. Phone 01-722 0395 if you need a creche.

Bottle Babies

A film on the effects of bottle-feeding in the Third World. Made earlier this year in Kenya, by Peter Krieg, it is part of an on-going campaign by the Baby Foods Action Group.

The film shows mothers, in urban slums and poor rural environments, bottle-feeding their babies. Scenes from the wards in the Kenyatta Hospital follow, where babies suffering from malnutrition and dehydration are being treated. Nine out of ten of these babies had been bottle-fed. A mother is filmed preparing the powdered milk from instructions on the tin. Misunderstanding of such instructions leads to over-dilution of the milk and under-nourishment of the infant. The unhygienic conditions, hot sun and unsterilized water lead to the growth of countless bacteria causing infection and disease. Why do the mothers give up breast-feeding? Bottle-feeding is encouraged by the multinational companies that manufacture powdered milk. The film shows the advertising methods

used — radio, posters, and calendars — all presenting "the bottle" as a symbol of progress.

16 mm colour, short version 20 mins or longer version 30 mins with additional part on the role of multinational companies. Available for hire — contact BFAG, 103 Gower St, London WC1 (01-387 3710)

Susan Lambert

photos

Photography Workshop

A group of people who hope to give practical help with educational and community-based photographic projects. They're compiling a newsletter and general bibliography of photography, and they're collecting images of people — both sexes, adults and children — from all types of printed matter. They need comics, cartoons, greetings cards, magazines (especially professional journals), old kids' books, wrappers from consumer goods and anything else that's around.

They need these to include in non-sexist teaching aids (for schools, youth clubs, women's groups), juxtaposed with photos they're taking of real people — kids, women at work. They're also looking for people willing to be photographed as they usually seem to be and as they can appear (with make-up, different clothes, etc). If you have anything to contribute contact them at 152 Upper St, London N1 (01-226 0367).

pamphlets

Brum Women's Paper

The November 75 issue is very interesting. It has all the usual news of local groups, meetings, NAC etc, plus a new departure. The editorial says that the collective compiling the newsletter realise that they aren't neutral but make choices about what goes in — in fact they write most of it! They hope "that the Women's Paper will now venture into wider areas, introducing a more outward-looking element of down-to-earth reality". So they're starting a news page with information on local women's struggles at home and in waged work. "Many women in Birmingham, without the support and ideology of Women's Liberation are involved in struggles, and are far more militant than us". The paper (12 pp) costs 12p plus 6½p postage or £2 for a year's subscription from 37 Trafalgar Rd, Birmingham 13.

The Rape Controversy

Written by Anna Coote and Tess Gill, and published by the National Council for Civil Liberties. Contro-

is not guilty of rape) was correct. The authors say they endorse the principle that a person should not be convicted of a serious crime he did not intend to commit, and talk about protecting the rights of the accused.

They do see that there is a "conflict of interest" between the raped women and the accused man, and suggest other changes in the law and practice for dealing with rape — the woman's name shouldn't be revealed, her "sexual history" should not be used as evidence against her, she shouldn't be expected to defend her honour with her life. There are suggestions on how rape victims should be helped outside the legal process, and on what to do if it happens to you. 40 pp, 50p plus postage from the NCCL, 186 King's Cross Rd, London WC1.

Women's Struggle in Portugal

Produced by women in Merseyside Big Flame using notes taken by women who visited Portugal in summer 1975. Detailed information about housing occupations, collective farms, the People's Health Clinic near Lisbon, the fight for free contraception and abortion. 14 pp, 4p plus 6½p postage from Box BF, 48 Manchester St, Liverpool 1.

Organising Women Workers

Written by Judith Hunt, National Women's Organiser of AUEW (TASS), and published by the Workers' Education Association. Full of facts about where women work, how many are unionised, how they are organising for equal pay, equal opportunity and social change. Appendices on charters for women workers, job evaluation, protective legislation. 25 pp, 35p plus 8p postage from the WEA, 9 Upper Berkeley St, London W1H 8BY.

Link

The autumn 75 issue of the Communist Party's women's journal is all about the Working Women's Charter — 16 pp, 10p plus 8p postage from Central Books, 37 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1.

Oral History

Special issue of the journal of the Oral History Society on family history. People born between 1875 and 1918 were asked about their childhood, youth, courtship and marriage. Elizabeth Roberts writes about socialisation outside school, Diana Gittins about married life and birth control between the wars. 64 pp, £1 from Ms Girling, Dept of Sociology, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex.

Rising in the North

Big Flame pamphlet on Ireland, arguing that British troops should be withdrawn now. Very good section on the Protestants — how the working-class is divided economically and socially — and discussion of whether the national question — the fight for a united Ireland — is in itself a class question. Emphasis on what it's like to live in a country at war; interviews with women in the Catholic ghettos. 31 pp, 30p including postage from Bookshop 632, 632 Bristol Rd, Birmingham 29.



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1976 calendar lovingly silk-screened by See Red Women's Workshop. 16x 20", £1.25 plus 16p postage. In shops or centres or orders to 5a, Larkhall Rise, London SW4.

All Work and No Pay Women, Housework and the Wages Due

Edited by Wendy Edmond and Suzie Fleming, published by the Power of Women Collective. A collection of articles putting the case for wages for housework. They aim to show that all women — lesbian or heterosexual, young or old, single or married, with or without children — are housewives, that this is the main way they are oppressed and the main thing they have in common — and therefore the basis on which they should unite. I think the recognition of woman's exploitation as housewife — I would say housewife and mother — is very important, but I don't think the answer is to ask the state to institutionalise the role of domestic slave. Also the demand is presented wrongly as an "answer" — it is too universalising, women's struggles are NOT the same all over the world. Some strong voices do come through in the book describing experiences that can't be reduced to a slogan — Rose Craig from Belfast and Ellen Jensen from Denmark, who works full-time in a poultry slaughterhouse and looks after her 6 children. Available from the Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earlham St, London WC2. 127 pp, 70p.

Marxism Today

In the November issue of the theoretical journal of the Communist Party Judith Hunt looks at the origins of the women's movement and how trade unions have been affected by feminist activity. 30 pp, 30p plus postage from Central Books, 37 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1.

New Departures

Double Issue (Nos 7/8, 10/11)
Edited by M. Horowitz.

A rather over-stuffed volume of poetry news, essays, photos, drawings and poems by Libby Houston, Stevie Smith, Allen Ginsberg and many other big cultural names. There are some good drawings and some good poems. Here is a taste of Adrian Mitchell's *A Tourist Guide to London*:

"£ Here are the slums
They are preserved as a tourist attraction
Here is a happy slum-dweller
Hello, slum-dweller!
No, his answer is impossible to translate."

and of feminist consciousness from Loretta Schwartz' *Fairy Tales*:

"... And having to admit
That men
Come
And then go
More like metronomes
Than princes ..."

190 pp, £2.40. Available from Compendium, London NW1, or New Departures, Bisleigh, nr. Stroud, Gloucester GL6 7BU

corrections

Indian Women Weavers

The exhibition of American Indian art mentioned in *Spare Rib* No 40 is taking place in Autumn 1976 not 1975. We're very sorry if anyone tried to go to it this year.

Kvinnfolk

The painting illustrated on page 44 of *Spare Rib* No 40 is by Anna Sjödah.



versial because it argues that the recent Law Lords ruling (that a man who honestly but unreasonably believes that the woman consents,



... THEN THERE'S PADDIPADS BEFORE THE SHOPS CLOSE AND THE COOKING FOR THIS LOT WASHING UP CHRIST MY BACK ACHES HOLDING THIS POSE AND I WANTED A GIRL ANYWAY ...

Understanding One's Rhythms

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
It is with great concern that I am replying to Josette Coburn-Morgan's letter in September's *Spare Rib* ('Pill Without Periods').

The contraceptive Pill consists of hormones which over-ride the body's innate hormonal control of fertility and menstruation. There is more and more evidence that living creatures follow rhythmic physiological cycles which are controlled by environmental stimuli together with innate 'clock' mechanisms. The human being's patterns of behaviour and physiological functions probably result from a

very delicate balance between several cycles.

Furthermore, it has been shown in insects that disturbances of innate cycles by the imposition of alien cycles cause tumors. The implications of taking any contraceptive pills at all could be very grave – and the suggestion that sisters take the pill continuously (i.e. no 'break' for a bleeding period to occur each month) should not be accepted uncritically.

True control of one's own body should come through an understanding of one's own body rhythms, not by means of a drug. For I believe that we should not shun our menstrual periods. We can, I hope, learn to

make them more comfortable for ourselves (better diet, exercises, rest, etc. help a lot). We should not let society persuade us into finding menstruation inconvenient.

Yours in sisterhood

Mary
Manchester

Occasionally Uninformed

Dear *Spare Rib*,
With regard to your article (edition 39) 'Coming Off Drugs And Alcohol', I would like to point out that some of your definitions of drugs listed at the end of the article are inaccurate.

Stelazine is an anti-psychotic agent and describing it as simply a tranquiliser is misleading. Valium is not an anti-depressant and is most commonly used to treat anxiety. I wish that your claim for the low success rate of amitriptyline was backed up by the relevant reference, as a simple assertion tells us very little.

In general I am a great admirer of your magazine but find that your criticism of psychiatric affairs is occasionally slightly uninformed, though often the general drift of your arguments is, in my opinion, correct.

Yours faithfully
Philip Kirby
Psychiatric Social Worker
Woodford Green
Essex

Breast Prosthesis

* Dear Sisters,
Because I'd written an article similar to that you published in issue 37 on breast cancer for New Zealand's *Broadsheet* I was given copy 37 to read and consider.

(Breast prostheses) are not available in New Zealand on Social Security and we must obtain them retail – all but one type produced in the US. But Jessie Golding of Ilford complains in 'Letters' of not being able to wash two Camp 'Tru-Life's in order to preserve them. She is in error. They are made to be washed; indeed the perspiration she speaks of will ruin them if she does not. Since I had my mastectomy, I've spoken to many women wearing them. Some for a few months – many for 3, 4 or 5 years. Some swim with them as they are made to do but I would personally stay clear of chlorinated water to prevent deterioration.

Jill Rakusen ('The Diagnosis, Treatment and Aftercare of Breast Cancer') says 'The best prosthesis is gel-filled with a silicone skin . . . and lasts indefinitely'. These are an exterior version of the internal silicone implants and as I found out when I visited New York City and spoke with 'Airway' Distributors, are the biggest breast prosthesis rip-off going.

The outer covering is affected by your skin chemistry, discolours and weakens so that the silicone pops through and they will not be repaired for this under the manufacturer's warranty. The manufacturer expects a life span for them of from three to five years. Many don't make one year.

Also, the Tru-Life are liable to leakage only if punctured but since the push for silicone prostheses, they've been accused of anything likely and unlikely – evaporation, shrinkage, etc. The cost and profit motive is why. I'll leave it to you to assess the cost of two 8oz breasts at £20 each and silicone at £1–£2 for 16oz.

Joan Simmons
Auckland
New Zealand

It Makes Me Sick

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Enter typist/clerkess, promotion in view.

When I got pregnant and ran away from home I rented a room in the nearest city. I had some money saved (my wages only paid the rent) and I remember the absolute torture of the whole situation. Nothing ever got better. I remember envy and self-pity and still think I was justified in both. I hated being pregnant and I was totally indifferent when the child was born. I left it behind as fast as I could.

All this because women are supposed to have this incredible 'love' thing going with every kid that anyone has ever produced. It makes me sick to think that any female has to go through the same experience just because society is generally in favour of perpetuating this myth. Asking for an abortion and having every single door slammed in your face; you'll love it when you see it; you'll get over the initial shock and then be glad you didn't; you want to murder your own child; have you really thought about this; I'm afraid it's too late, etc., etc.

Exit a guilt-ridden, dope-sodden prostitute (eventually).

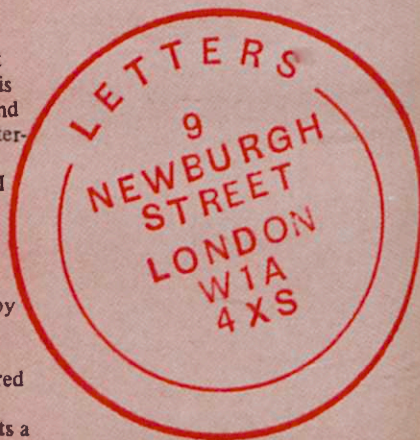
I don't know how I managed to escape the suicide bit – I did have a couple of tries. Perhaps I just didn't have time.

Re-enter complex-ridden, neurotic typist/clerkess.

Power to your magazine. Power to the movement. I am tired of being what the nearest bloke expects me to be.

M Miller
London N20

* Indicates that the letter has been cut for space reasons



On the night before the last day of the Test Match a group of working class Londoners stole on to Headingley Cricket ground equipped with spades and cans of oil. The next day, their slogan 'George Davis is Innocent' flashed round the world. *Alison Fell* and *Lynne Segal* look at the circumstances surrounding the George Davis case, and talk to *Rose Davis* about her activities in the long campaign to free her husband and what changes these have brought about in her life.



On April 4th, 1974 four masked men robbed the offices of the London Electricity Board in Ilford. The men escaped completely, but only after a spectacular police chase in which they changed cars six times and left a great deal of forensic evidence – clothes, blood and saliva-stained face-masks, hairs, weapons and cartridges. A month later George Davis was picked up and held while police mounted several Identity Parades during May and July, at which he was joined by fellow East-enders George England, Micky Ishmael and Tommy Hole. Thirty civilian eye-witnesses to the Ilford robbery were called to these parades and all failed to identify Davis. Five police officers, however, succeeded, and it was on this basis that he was charged with armed robbery. None of the 300 or so items of forensic evidence connected in any way with Davis, and were useless for any case against him. According to a detailed study of the

case in *Up Against The Law*¹, Detective Sergeant Matthews, in charge of the investigation into the Ilford robbery, withheld knowledge of this for long enough to get Davis and the others into the dock of the Old Bailey:

"Blood samples taken from Ishmael, Davis and England on May 18th were passed on to the Yard's Senior Scientific Officer, Peter Martin, on May 21st and he reported his negative findings to Matthews on June 20th. At as late as November on a third bail application, and after committals had been completed (October 28th) Matthews was saying that he still awaited the blood results from forensic."

So the prosecution case against Davis rested largely on his having been identified by the 5 police officers, with no supporting evidence apart from police 'verbals' – written police accounts of what Davis said

when charged – which he, his family and friends insist are complete fabrication.

The trial ended in March of this year. The jury deliberated for five days and were unable to reach a unanimous verdict. The judge instructed them that a majority verdict would be acceptable. George Davis was found guilty of armed robbery and sentenced to 20 years. His co-defendants were acquitted.

Davis' wife Rose, his family, friends and a growing number of supporters are convinced of his innocence; they are fighting the guilty verdict on two points – the notorious unreliability of Identification evidence², and their conviction that Davis was fitted up by police.

Evidence is emerging that certain police officers in the investigation were not at all involved in finding out who really carried out the robbery, rather in picking out some

possible candidates for a speedy conviction and rigging the evidence to fit. From the beginning Rose Davis and alibi witness Peter Chappell — who met Davis on the morning of the L.E.B. robbery — have been in contact with Scotland Yard's A10 Department, the squad set up by Sir Robert Mark to weed out corruption within the police force.

What odds did George Davis' supporters take on when they began their fight to prove his innocence and reverse the verdict? First, there's the fact that the attitudes of police and court tend to reinforce each other. The police know that magistrates, judges and juries generally subscribe to the same prejudices as themselves, so that once they get a squatter, Miss World demonstrator, black youth or, in this case, working-class East-ender, into the dock, a conviction is reasonably likely — so they can give in to the temptation to discreetly omit facts or use a lot of imagination when writing their court statements. A large part of any prosecution case rests on slander by association and an appeal to ingrained class, sex and race prejudice.

Then there's the impossible slowness of the process of Appeal. Once the State has sent someone to prison it's very difficult to free them. George Davis has been in prison for eighteen months and has not yet been granted *leave* to appeal. The Home Office prevaricates. Getting a case to the Appeal Court is made as difficult as possible, and can take years. For example, by the time three Lewisham youths had their conviction quashed by the Appeal Court last month, they had been in custody for three years. Lord Justice Scarman referring to their case said that the court statements presented by the police had contained 'striking omissions'.

And finally there's the lack of interest of the Press. Fleet Street ignored the Davis case until Peter Chappell literally rammed it under their noses by smashing a truck into their windows. The big dailies have a reputation for bringing scandals into the public eye, for muck-raking, even. But they are, above all, selective muck-rakers; when it comes to Old Bailey trials Fleet Street falls more or less meekly in line behind the prosecution, certainly ensuring that the nation, reading its morning newspaper, quietly consents to the guilty verdict. They are never agog for facts which cast a bright light on the darker miscarriages or class-ridden paternity of British Justice.

These are the odds facing the Campaign to Free George Davis. They are the same odds that face any ordinary people who challenge the law and its processes.

¹ Britain is still the only European democracy which can still convict on identification alone. A pamphlet documenting cases of wrongful conviction due to dubious identification evidence has been published by Justice, a law reform organisation which has been submitting evidence to the Devlin Committee on Identification Parades. The pamphlet, *Evidence of Identity*, costs 50p and is available from Justice, 2 Clements Inn, Strand, WC2.

² In issue No 9 of *Up Against the Law*, a militant law magazine available from UPAL, 66 York Way, N1.

DAILY TELEGRAPH



Rose Davis chastises police outside Leeds Magistrate's Court, September 75

Rose talking

Rose Davis has been central to the campaign from the beginning.

Eighteen months ago she was a housewife, with absolutely no experience of militancy or organising. Since her husband was arrested, she has gone through every aspect of campaign politics, from writing letters to newspapers and MPs and petitioning Downing Street to unrepentant direct action. She has gone through changes in her attitudes to the police and the law, to the media and public opinion, and encouraged her children and relatives to do the same.

Why do you think they picked on George?

"People say to me 'Oh, well, George has a record, he's been in prison before'. But when I tell them that George has never been in prison they can't get over it. He's got one conviction, that's all. And we've got plenty of friends with records — but who are we to condemn anyone because they've been in prison — this is nothing to do with us, it's just association. And these men's records aren't recent, they go back years, when they were younger and more irresponsible. Of course George went in to court and every alibi witness he had apart from those that weren't called had records. And that jury must have thought 'Uh-huh'. But then if a man's going to stick an alibi up, he's not going to pick men with records, is he? He's going to pick straight people who've never been inside in their lives."

What about the Identification evidence?

"This is where it's harder for us than for any other case because you've got 5 police officers — if they were 5 ordinary members of the public they could be wrong, but not 5 police officers. They tell you they're trained to be observant — and they'll be frightened

for their jobs. I mean, this identification evidence alone is a joke, because, the way I look at it, you're not safe, as long as police officers just have to say it was you for that to put you away. I mean, how many George Davises are there in prison?"

Have you been in contact with other prisoners' wives?

"Yes, quite a lot of other wives in my position ring me, and we're trying to form a group. I know of two cases based on Identification evidence — just on Identification evidence. One of these wives was over Wednesday last — she's a well-educated person, got her own home and everything — her husband was picked out from the back, identified from the back."

Do you think that your family and friends' attitudes to the police have changed?

"Oh, God, yes. Honestly I never used to believe they did what they do. I was so naive, the first time I went to Brixton to visit George I thought they still wore shirts with little arrows — you get more experienced as the months go on. I've got six brothers and two sisters — now my sisters, it took a long time to convince them — not that they ever doubted George was innocent — to get through to them that the police *do* this. They'd say 'I can't believe it', but of course over the months they've seen a little bit of it and they've come round to my way of thinking."

It certainly makes you sit and think. I mean, I've picked up papers and I've condemned people. I could never just pick another paper up and condemn anybody — I don't care if they're IRA, the lot."

When is the appeal likely to be?

"We've heard nothing. He hasn't even been granted leave to appeal yet. He's been in there seven months. But I've heard that you can wait as long as two years. They don't hurry themselves, do they?"

So what's George thinking — is he just waiting?

Well, the hardest thing is, with George being a Category A prisoner there's only me and his father and mother who can visit him. I've been pretty lucky with visits — about once a fortnight, and you get a couple of hours, so can't grumble I suppose. You've got to go in there and you've got to laugh — no matter what's going on out here you've got to put on a brave front. The hardest time was when I first went to see him after he was convicted; I just didn't know what to expect. He looked so ill, he had on one of these old grey suits they put on them. I walked in and I could see him sitting all on his own in a corner with two screws, and I thought My God, how they're treating him, as if he was a great big killer or a vicious man. And I thought, right, there's loads of screws, so I said 'Ooh, who got you ready this morning then?' And he roared. 'The underwear's not too bad,' he said, and we all laughed. We've managed to give him courage as far as that goes — he was in Brixton ten months too and we never missed a visit."

Dear Rose,

Let me say that I fully support you in your fight to get justice for your husband George. The papers and TV have been screaming about vandalism and an outrage. They don't think that taking 20 years of a man's life is an outrage. The papers say that public opinion will be turned against you because of the action taken at Headingley. Well I'm sure you know that public opinion was never with you because no-one outside London had heard of George Davis, until action was taken. The action at Headingley was absolutely right. It did more for George than any numbers of letters to MPs. The papers will start talking about proper channels. Proper channels don't work. They are not supposed to do. Our rulers want people to get frustrated and fed up with the time wasting red tape, so that people will give in. When people stand up

Letters of support received by Rose Davis

Is he getting much support from people inside?

"Yes — people come up all the time and say 'We know you never did it, George.'"

Do you think he's confident that he will get out?

"Oh yes, who wouldn't be? How many get put away and that's it forgotten about? At least he knows we're out here fighting for him. It's never been done before in such a big way."

Did the Campaign get going slowly at first?

"No, right away. George was sentenced on the 18th of March and on the 20th we were out with leaflets. We did all the trains, we stuck them everywhere. We did London Bridge — you couldn't put a pin between them."

Did you feel as if doing things through legal channels was getting nowhere?

"Well, I mean, we tried everything quietly. You get stupid people, like on that George Gale programme who say 'Well, why don't the George Davis campaigners write to their MPs?' What a joke. I've written letters. A good 130 nearly. I've written to the Queen, I've written to everyone, and I'm still writing them."

What sort of replies did you get?

"Well, it's the same old thing. None of them will commit themselves. We petitioned Downing Street. We wrote letters to all the papers and they didn't take any notice... and look at the time I went to Scotland Yard and asked to see the High Commissioner. The two girls behind the desk just giggled. I said what are you laughing at, he's a public servant, isn't he? 'Oh,' they said, 'it's like asking to see the Queen.'"

But the first thing Peter Chappell did was because we'd written all the newspapers letters about the case and nobody took any notice — he drove a pickup truck into their windows in Fleet Street. After he'd done that — the police cars were all round, sirens going — he drove into Buckingham Palace Gates. As I say Peter does not think George is innocent, he knows he's innocent. Because

he saw him the morning of the robbery. That's why he's so dedicated. And Shirley feels the same. How many wives would put up with what she's put up with? Peter was earning over £100 a week, now he's on national assistance. How many people would give that up?"

What else have you done?

"In April ten of us women went and chained ourselves across Fleet Street. There was a policeman on traffic duty. He was shaking with temper. 'Get up' he shouts, and we just sat there. It was terrific. Then they came and dragged us up. A week later we sat down in Bethnal Green. We had to appear in court the next morning, on obstruction charges. My brother Colin brought his two toddlers. This great big policeman came out and said 'What are you going to do with it?' Colin went mad. 'How dare you call my children it — they're children, not *its*.' The matron couldn't control them. They kicked her, and pinched her. We took them in the dock with us. There was chocolate from one end of the dock to the other. We've had some laughs. It's a wonder we haven't killed ourselves... you know. At eight o'clock in the morning we've gone across bridges, really unsafe. And I've said 'For Christ's sake, if you fall through one of those, whatever you do, write Justice for Davis before you hit the ground'."

How do you decide what to do?

"Some of the ideas we've had! There was one thing we nearly tried to do, but I stopped them doing it. There was a big conference or tea party or something at Lincoln's Inn, and it was under a marquee — lawyers, judges, you know — and someone

wanted to go while everyone was in there and cut the ropes down. He said 'Why not?' I said someone might get hurt. He said 'Or we'll go in there with itching powder.'

We've had four marches in all, and turned up on public occasions, like when Wilson opened the Labour History Museum in the East End. We got a lot of support there. But, I mean, look what Colin and Jimmy did. On 'Mayday they went and sat on the top of St. Paul's for seven hours — seven hours, and it was a bitter cold day. They had a banner demanding George's release, and announcing a march. They're going to the Old Bailey for that.

Then there was the time Peter went to Paris. He found the British Embassy but he couldn't find a brick. Eventually he saw a load of workmen, so he drops his overcoat, and when he picks it up he's got a brick under it. He went inside to make sure no one could get hurt by glass then he picks up the brick and goes WALLOP. Then he went up to the girl at the desk and said 'I did that'. She never took a bit of notice. So out he goes and does exactly the same thing again. Eventually they just put him outside — 'On your way'. So he put his mac under his head and laid in the road. He said there were cars everywhere going BEEP BEEP. And he just laid there. They took him to a mental hospital, put him in a room with a warder, stripped him off and just left him there for a couple of hours. He saw seven doctors, and they just kept saying 'Peeter, zere is nozzing wrong wiz you'. Anyway, they escorted him to the train, and the law were going 'encore, encore' and clapping him.

Then there was Christmas day. I'd been asked round to Peter and Shirley's but I didn't want to uproot the kids. The phone went. It was Peter, he'd had a couple of drinks; he said 'You all right?' I said yes. He said 'It's Christmas day and there's Shirley and Dorothy and the kids here and you round there on your own. It's not right.' A couple of hours go by and Shirley rings up. 'Peter's been nicked.' He'd gone to Trafalgar Square, fused the Christmas Tree lights and gone over to the nearest policeman and said 'I just did that.' 'Fuck off,' the policeman said 'I'm off duty tomorrow, go and tell him over there'. And he's never paid a penny fine. The judge fined him £50 for that one, and said 'And how do you intend paying this?'... 'I don't, sir,' he said."

You must have incurred a lot of fines — are you paying any of them?

"Yes, well, I will for last week [the charges arising from the sit down protest outside the Leeds Court where Peter Chappell and Colin Dean were refused bail after the Headingley cricket ground sabotage]. If it was family I wouldn't be so bothered, but these are ordinary people, I don't even know them, so why should they have to pay up for me?"

How many of you were in the road protesting?

"About 20 sat down in all, 11 were finally arrested. I've got two sisters, one's as frightened as anything but she was determined to sit, the other one's a bit of a madam — she's all right but she's very hoity-toity, frightened of getting her trouser suit dirty.▶

Dear Mrs Rose Davis,
First, I hope you won't mind me writing to you, I got your name and address from the paper of course. I don't know you or your husband, or anyone involved to free George Davis, but I do agree with you, that violence is the only way to get notice taken of injustice. I have threatened the Yard in writing, that I will stab the first copper whom wrongfully arrests my son again, for something I know he did not do, I am not a violent person, but on the spur of the moment I would do this, to save the heartache a wrongful arrest and conviction causes the family, and the heartache and indignity caused to the boy himself. I was with my son on dates and times of burglary the police framed him on, I know he did not do them. A 10 "investigation" so they say, but they did not investigate anything that would have proved my son innocent, I accused them in the News of the World of covering up, (which they did) a couple of weeks ago.

I am in this area, whom have suffered in the same way. Because we are working class and live on a Council Estate, no-one bothers. No-one stamps on me and gets away with it, if it takes me all my life, I'll clear my son of something he couldn't possibly have done. Best wishes to you and your family in your fight.

She sat down real carefully and the police officer said 'GET UP' and she said 'Oh,' and went to jump up — I said 'SIT DOWN, you bloody lunatic'. But the other one, they dragged her off and she had to stay in jail all night. She sat up all night — she was a bundle of nerves. Never even had a parking fine, and they asked her for her fingerprints!"

Do they support you all the way, your relatives and parents?

"Oh yes, sure. And I mean, the support even up in Leeds has been absolutely marvellous. From people you don't even know — how can you thank them? A schoolteacher sat in the road, a Leeds bus driver — I thought, God, if he loses his job over this, what am I going to do. The first time we went up to

Leeds we didn't know what to expect, I thought 'Oh, there'll be a lynching party' — Yorkshire and all that, they go mad over cricket, but as I said, they were marvellous."

What about locally round the estate, have you had much support?

"No, not really. As far as neighbours go, I've got nice neighbours but they like to keep

Dear Mrs. Davis,
I, along with my family
wish you all the luck in the world
with your campaign to free your
husband. I myself feel for you, your
children & most of all your husband.
-to imagine the hell he goes through
is impossible - one has to be in such a

themselves to themselves, I think this is it. And then I've met a lot of people through the campaign. I've had a lot of letters of support — over 50, and Shirley's had quite a lot. I had one from an old age pensioner up North saying that this happened to him 50 years ago. He was put in Pentonville and when he came out he was given 7/6d, and he went and joined the army. He said 'I've got hundreds of supporters up here if you wish for us to come down.'"

Have you had support from unions?

Not really. We leafletted the meat market and the docks — we fixed a date for a meeting with the dockers but nobody showed up. Me and Peter went to the docks four or five times, plus we leafletted the gates at

four o'clock every morning, so they couldn't say they'd never heard of it. No, we haven't had their support, not so far anyway. And after all, they're your own people, aren't they.

Then a schoolteacher handed me these poems his kids had done about George Davis's innocence. And at another school they were doing points of law from the case in class. And then people come back from holidays and tell me there's 'George Davis is Innocent' all over Austria, in France, and Spain. Someone said it was painted up in Madison Avenue in New York! I had someone ring me and say they'd heard of a man in court saying when he was convicted 'I'm a guilty man, but George Davis is innocent!'

What was your day-to-day life like before — how has it changed?

"Well, it was just ordinary — a housewife. I've got two kids, a girl 17 and a boy 10. I'm in a better position than Shirley, she's got three babies under 6. It's been pretty rough on her."

Have you tried to work out ways of minding the kids?

"Oh, we do. You can imagine how I feel, I feel very responsible for them. After all, her husband's done this for George. So we share — funds are very tight — so whatever we've got we share. There's Colin's wife as well, she's got two babies and she's pregnant, so I sort of try and get over to her and Shirley's as much as I can."

How are you managing financially?

"I get £18.31 a week National Assistance — £9 a week for rent, so we have to live on £9. But all the family put in so much a week to buy a load of groceries which are shared between me, Shirley, we all share. I'm fortunate as far as that's concerned, they've been very good. But they've got families of their own to keep, so you can't expect them to keep giving."

Have you managed to stay cheerful?

"Well, people say 'How can you laugh?' but life's still got to go on. It's so easy to sit down and go into a shell. It keeps you going

ISLINGTON COMMUNITY PRESS



yourself, knowing that you're doing something — I suppose I have lost a lot of weight, and the kids have suffered in that I've not been in quite as much — they've not only lost George, but I'm not here as well, that's the only thing I feel a little bit guilty about."

But they've got involved too, haven't they?

"Yes — my daughter, she's a very quiet sort of kid, but even she sat in the road, which is amazing. The boy's like me, but she's like her dad, very quiet. But she says 'I want to come with you' and joins in everything. At first she was a little bit embarrassed but I said 'Don't you be ashamed, Daddy never did it,' and that's it. The sad thing is, though, that you've got to do all these things to get somewhere, whereas if you've got plenty of money you don't have to have all this aggravation, you just pay over the money and it's all done for you."

Have you had many people put you down for being a woman and being so militant?

"No, not really. Well, I had a person ring me up and say 'Is it, well, you know, political?' Well, it wasn't, but it is now, because anything that's a group, it becomes political. And I had this letter the other day, enclosing a photo of me at Leeds, screaming at the police. 'Dear Mrs Davis, this is the second nasty picture I have seen of you, shouting at someone. What a thoroughly nasty woman you must be, married to an equally nasty man. Bad luck to you.' When I think that we've sat in courts for months and been just ever so quiet, never opened our mouths — oh, I was raging when I read that. I'd like to put someone else in my position and see what they'd do. That's what I say now to people who're nasty — 'In my position, what would you have done?'"

If George gets out, will you keep up an interest in these things?

"People have asked if, please God, George comes home, will it finish there, but it won't. Because I hope I will help someone that's been in my position, I'd go all out to help as much as I could. Like Peter says, he says he's fighting for when his kids are older, this could happen to them. Which really is right. If things are like they are, now — what are they going to be like in ten years time?"



Australian touring cricket team 1975

Waldorf Hotel,
Aldwych,
London WC2B 4DD.
30th August 1975

Dear Mrs. Davis,

Thank you for your letter and I appreciate your apology. I hope that in the end justice will prevail and if your husband is not guilty he will be freed.

I understand your position and your feelings. You have my sympathies and, as I say, I hope the right decision will be reached in the end.

Regards,

Yours sincerely,

Peter Chappell

P. Chappell
Captain

On November 3rd, Peter Chappell and Colin Dean, charged with sabotaging the Headingley cricket pitch, were at last granted bail. They, along with Geraldine Hughes, a journalist active in the campaign, had been in prison for nearly four months. Their bail applications had been turned down again and again on grounds that "they would interfere with witnesses". At the beginning of October they went on a week's hunger strike in protest against this refusal of bail, and 50 of their fellow prisoners in Armley jail staged a sit-down in solidarity. On Friday 24th October, Rose Davis and two friends chained themselves to the railings at the top of the 200ft. Monument in the City. And on Sunday 26th, 150 people marched again from Tower Hill to Downing Street. As they marched they sang the closing lines of the song from the play about the campaign currently at the Half Moon Theatre . . .

"We'll fight for ever and a day,
George Davis is innocent, OKAY?" □

The Campaign to Free George Davis can be contacted at 110 Wager Street, London E3. Tel: 01-980 0468.

JUSTICE FOR DAVIS

Twenty years for Davis,
That's his name,
He was convicted for a crime he didn't do,
Is he to blame?

Five policemen said he was guilty,
Thirty two citizens said 'no',
Anyway the police said,
'Sorry, you have to go.'

Twenty years they gave him,
Rotting in the jail,
And all the citizens of London
Said they would pay his bail.

They even put oil on the cricket pitch,
They would do anything for him now
They would even bomb down Parliament
To get him out of jail.

THAT'S JUSTICE FOR DAVIS ALRIGHT!

One of several poems written about the campaign by local school pupils

HALF MOON THEATRE
"GEORGE DAVIS IS
INNOCENT O.K."

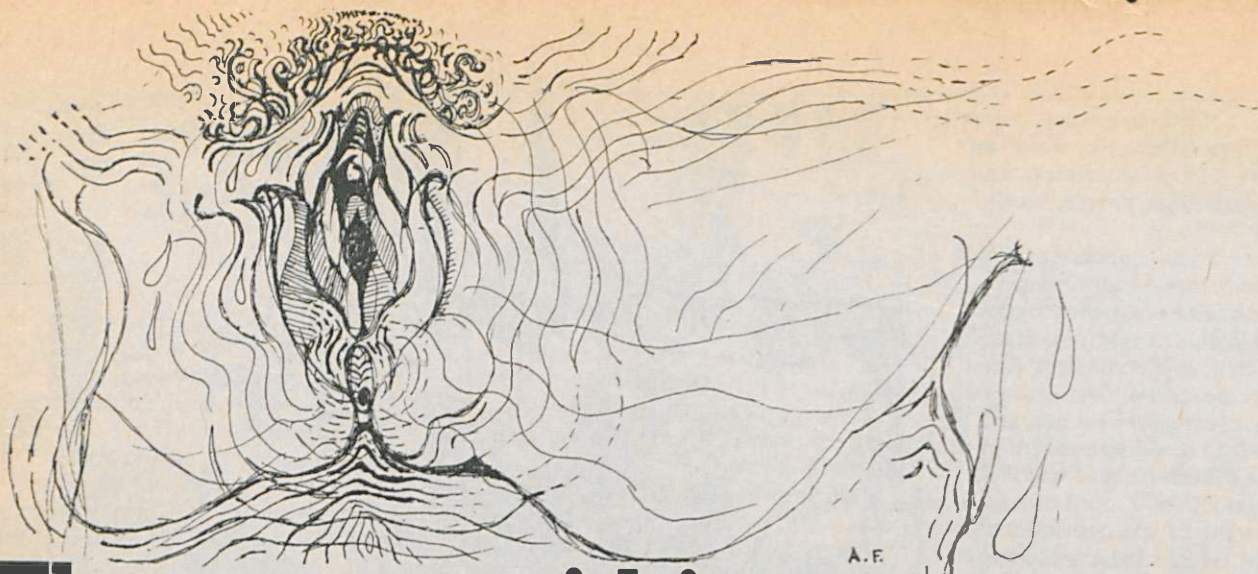
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The moon within your reach:

a feminist approach to female orgasm

"The toughest problem to treat is frigidity, some say because a woman's response is so subjective, variable, and vulnerable to so many outside factors. In any case, success depends upon the goals of the patient. Some are happy to be having sex at all. Some want the moon."

FPA doctor, Sunday Times, Sept. 1975

A significant percentage of women have never experienced orgasm. For those who wish to do so, the kinds of help available are limited to conventional psychotherapy and the more practical Masters and Johnson couple therapy. Success is problematic, the treatment time consuming and usually expensive. Recently feminists in California and New York have developed a completely new approach to this question based upon the changed attitudes to female sexuality which have come out of the women's movement. They have set up institutes which organise pre-orgasmic women's groups to give women permission to explore their sexual responses and to discover for themselves how to have orgasms. The groups are led by experienced counsellors who have been trained in this work; fees are on a sliding scale and covered by state medical insurance. Ninety five percent of the women who attend the groups learn how to have orgasms by the end of the five week session. The ability to have orgasms through masturbation is the first step to sharing this with a partner.

Eleanor Stephens who has been living in Berkeley, California, describes this new work and explains how it challenges the sexual myths and models which have defined our attitudes to sexuality and our treatment of sexual difficulties.

**'Anyone
who can learn
to ride a bicycle can
learn to have
an orgasm.'**

Amongst all the issues raised by the women's movement, the feminist approach to female sexuality is one which has, for many women, completely transformed our feelings about ourselves and our lives. Just as women are questioning many of the institutions, ideas and social relations defined for us by men, so we are no longer prepared to accept traditional sexual attitudes and practices. These attitudes have for centuries kept us in ignorance of our needs and responses, and unequal and passive in our relationships with men.

The implications of taking responsibility for our own sexuality reach into all areas of our lives, giving women a new sense of autonomy and power. Theorists such as Freud, Reich and Marcuse have often connected sexual satisfaction with 'self actualisation' and linked sexual repression with a submissive personality structure. It is time to apply this to women. A feminist psychiatrist, Carmen Kerr, puts it this way: 'Taking an active role in making her sex life exactly how she wants it, is the nitty gritty of women asking for what they want in their lives as a whole. For women to feel confident and knowledgeable enough to say 'I want more of that' and 'I don't want any of that, thanks' during sex, and so achieve her demands and needs, is a most immediately rewarding way for her to be

able to do the same with other demands in her life . . . In other words, I believe that for some women to break down their sexual inhibitions is a first, indispensable step in claiming power in respect to men, and ultimately the world'. (*Women's Orgasm*)

This may sound very high flying and theoretical but, as with many of the issues of the women's movement, the reality on which it is based is profoundly personal. Before each of us can begin to take responsibility for our individual sexuality, we have to discover for ourselves what it is that we want.

My own experience of first discussing sex in a serious and open way, in contrast to nervous giggling with girlfriends at school and embarrassed exchanges with teachers, took place in my women's group in Cambridge, Mass. At that time I was living with a man with our small child and while I was aware of some problems, I was generally happy with our sexual relationship. One small 'problem' which I never thought worth mentioning or seeking 'professional advice' (which I'm thankful I didn't) was that I was never sure whether or not I had orgasms. The hot topic of the day was the vaginal versus clitoral controversy, which added to the confusion. It was an extraordinary relief to find that women in my group had similar doubts and confusions. With their encouragement, I taught myself to masturbate, and gradually learned what my body enjoyed and the sensations that I was capable of experiencing. Although it took a long time to share this with my lover, at least I knew what I was aiming at and what I needed. I also realised that I had been defining my satisfaction in his terms, and for me the climax was a feeling of empathy with his orgasm. We accepted this since it seemed that we often achieved the famed goal of simultaneous orgasm, though in fact we were both experiencing his orgasm!

The following year I worked with a group of women teaching the course called 'Women and Our Bodies', the material for which was later published as the book *Our Bodies, Ourselves*. Of the ten topics covered in the course, the three which concerned female sexuality were the most popular. At the end of the last session, a shy woman in her thirties with three children came up to me to tell me how useful she had found this and how much she had enjoyed it. But could she ask me one last question: 'What does it feel like to have an orgasm?' For her, and how many others, I knew that we had failed. Yet we had talked frankly about childhood experiences and attitudes to our bodies, Freud and other theorists had been discussed, the Masters and Johnson work reviewed, extrovert women had compared positions that suited them best, and so on. Yet basically we'd missed the point, and it was very likely that a lot of the women coming to our groups were not experiencing orgasm. (Kinsey's survey of 1938-49 on 5940 women showed that 55% never or rarely experienced orgasm. The 1972 Playboy Foundation study showed a decrease of only 7%.) Why not and what could be done? While it was important to connect female orgasm with clitoral rather than vaginal stimulation, the crucial point was not 'where does it happen?' but what makes it happen? At that time women were learning all kinds of new practical skills, like car mechanics and self defence, and it occurred to me that if we could demystify sexuality and think of the orgasm response as a skill then we could begin to help women to learn it. And the simplest way, the way that had worked for me, was through masturbation.

Two years later, in 1973, I went to work in Berkeley, California and found that this idea had occurred to feminists there and that groups had already begun with the aim of teaching women to reach orgasm through masturbation. (Berkeley, of course, where every flat surface is a notice board, has groups on everything so this was not so surprising.) These groups, which started in 1972 and are going from strength to strength, helping hundreds of women, are called pre-orgasmic women's groups. Pre-orgasmic rather than the medical term - 'non-orgasmic', because this approach presupposes that every woman with a clitoris can become orgasmic given the right kind and amount of stimulation. Anyone who can learn to ride a bicycle, and this too can be a slow and fearful process especially as an adult, can learn to have an orgasm. While the term 'pre-orgasmic' may sound pompous, it seems to be accurate; the success rate is astonishing. A minimum of 90% of the women become orgasmic by the end of the ten week course (through masturbation) and a follow-up study showed that within four months fifty percent of the women experienced orgasms in their sexual relationships. Many women joined these groups as a last resort having spent hundreds of dollars and hours in conventional psychotherapy, hypnosis, encounter groups, anything that offered hope. And most commonly and sadly, they would go from one relationship to another looking for the right lover who would teach them the secret of sexual satisfaction. This after all is

an important aspect of the Romantic Myth of the Ideal Lover, which has prevented women from taking responsibility for their own sexuality, and maintained their dependence on men.

This new definition of the female orgasm throws the clinical concept of frigidity out of the window. At a conference in Berkeley in January, a female therapist from the Women's Sexuality Institute, one of the several organisations that run these workshops, began her speech with the rally call: 'There is no such thing as a frigid woman!' The entire audience, over two hundred men and women, rose to their feet and cheered. A frigid woman is one who has not had an orgasm - yet. This is the simple assumption on which the workshops are based, together with the belief that the key to achieving orgasm is through masturbation, as a Los Angeles therapist explains: 'It's our conviction that a woman must be in touch with her own sexuality and understand her own individual needs before she can effectively communicate to her partner her likes and dislikes, and what she finds sexually exciting. Masturbation is the best way for a woman to learn and teach herself about herself.' By teaching women to give orgasms to themselves, literally to learn to love themselves, the whole process is demystified and orgasm is seen not as something beyond

'Once we fake orgasm, we are trapped in the biggest collective lie of all.'

our control, something 'done to us' but something which we can cause to happen. With this confidence, we can then share the experience with a partner when we make love.

How then are the groups or workshops organised? There are several variations but in general they follow a similar pattern based upon the method developed by Lonnie Barbach and Nancy Carlsen, two therapists who worked at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco. Each group has two co-ordinators who lead the discussions and not more than ten members; they meet for two hours twice a week for five weeks. The women contract to undertake one hour's homework each day, which is essential and involves a heavy time commitment. (Five weeks of intensive work seems to be more effective than a longer period.) The techniques used come from a variety of sources: Masters and Johnson, and Lo Piccolo and Kegel, whose specific exercises for controlling the muscles of the pelvic floor are practised. Relaxation exercises and massage are an initial part of the homework helping women to explore and feel comfortable with their bodies in general, and sexual areas in particular, as a preliminary for masturbation. The first sessions introduce women to the physiological and anatomical aspects of human sexuality, about which

many women are ignorant; some feel their genitals are abnormal and it is reassuring to look at pictures and to look at themselves in a mirror.

Detailed discussion of the process of masturbation is introduced through several short films which have been made for this purpose. One shows a woman taking a shower, enjoying soaping herself and touching her body, then going on to masturbate to orgasm. Another film shows a woman using a vibrator. However strange this sounds, in practice the films work beautifully. They are sensitively produced and their explicitness makes them far more useful than books or lectures. (Most young boys have seen each other masturbate, but very few women have ever shared this.) Another film shows a heterosexual couple making love with both of them concentrating on the woman reaching orgasm - by manual stimulation not through penetration which is, incidentally, the most difficult way for most women to reach a climax. In this film the woman has an orgasm and the man does not, and both appear happy and satisfied with this. Women are so used to the opposite situation that it is gratifying to see an alternative. This raises discussion of the problems associated with simultaneous orgasm, a very entrenched myth, and very frustrating to women. Except in the situation where both people stimulate each other orally, it is very hard for partners to give sensitive and rhythmic stimulation when they are on the verge of an orgasm themselves. In most heterosexual situations, the man becomes distracted from the woman's orgasm and the woman gives way to the male orgasm.

Lots of time in each session is devoted to sharing feelings about sex in general and particularly about orgasm. Many women find themselves reaching a block because of all their deeply rooted fears. The fear of being out of control is very common, so that when they feel themselves close to a climax, they deliberately resist the sensations. Some worry about looking funny, or making too much noise, or not enough. Lots of these aspects of self-consciousness are relieved by the privacy of masturbation, and being able to share the worries with others in the group. We all have so many 'shoulds' about sex, so many imperatives which we have been socialised to accept, that it is hard to find out what we are really like. This is the importance of the hour's daily homework; it gives women a chance to explore their own potential for sexual pleasure without pressures to conform to external standards. Many women find it hard to put aside this time for themselves because they feel that they don't deserve the attention. This is why the group structure and the support it gives is so crucial. The process involves so much courage and trust, that without encouragement many women could not continue. The leaders, some of whom have clinical group experience, are all trained and meet together to discuss the progress of their different groups. They bring to each group the experiences of many women they have worked with, and also share their own personal feelings. In the traditions of the women's movement, the groups are non hierarchical and everybody is encouraged to participate. ►

The focus of these groups is to teach women to achieve orgasm through masturbation, and only if there is time will the problems of having orgasms with a partner be discussed. (Some women may not currently be in a relationship.) Other groups now exist which deal specifically with this, and lots of women go on to these groups; while it is a great breakthrough to experience orgasm for the first time, it is only a start. Most women want to share this with their lovers. But one problem which is important to confront from the outset, since it can be a huge stumbling block, is that of the woman who has learned to fake orgasm. This is far more common than I ever supposed, though I had been aware of doing it myself on occasion. Betty Dodson, who organises similar body workshops in New York, describes a woman called Nancy who, after six years of heterosexual relationships, had taught herself to have orgasms using a stream of water from the tap while in the bath: 'Nancy started a new love affair and felt confused about how to handle the sex with him. Now that she knew what orgasm was, should she tell him that she could not come having intercourse. I urged her to get her lover involved in her sexual exploration immediately and stressed the importance of not faking orgasm. Once we do that we are trapped in the biggest collective lie of them all. We must stop sacrificing our own pleasure to protect the male ego or to avoid taking sexual responsibility for ourselves.' Nancy took this advice and fortunately her boyfriend was reassuring and explored her sexuality with her. 'Within a relatively short period of time, Nancy was able to have orgasms several different ways: with water, with the vibrator, by hand, with oral sex, and with intercourse plus the vibrator.'

Nancy's situation was easier, but to confront the fact that one doesn't have orgasms if one has been pretending to do so, takes a tremendous amount of courage. One woman who had been faking for five years finally explained this to her husband. He told her that she deserved an Academy Award for best actress of the century. His response was sympathetic and relevant because many women feel that when they are in bed, they are also on stage, and when the earth doesn't move we believe it is us who have failed.

Several criticisms of this approach are commonly raised during discussion and it may be helpful to try to answer some now:

Isn't all this very unromantic?

Yes, it certainly is. Romanticism is largely responsible for keeping people in ignorance about sex and maintaining many of our most oppressive myths. Women have tolerated miserable sexual relationships, faked orgasms and generally kept quiet about their needs, all in the name of Romantic Love. But I do not believe that it is unromantic, in the sense of unloving or mechanical, to discuss sex with your lover. To plunge into a sexual encounter 'spontaneously' and just let it happen will usually be to the disadvantage of the woman. Ultimately, both people suffer if one of them is not happy and many relationships where strong 'romantic' attractions exist,

deteriorate because of fear and ignorance of discussing ways to improve their sexual communication. Nothing in the approach described here is intended to undermine the importance of the human and emotional aspects of sex. It simply supposes that women have the right to enter a relationship on an equal basis with men, with the confidence that both people can and will have orgasms if they wish.

Are you saying that women are never helped by traditional therapy and psychoanalysis?

My own suspicions of psychotherapy are so deeply entrenched since I have known so many women severely damaged by this patriarchal institution, that I would almost never recommend this course. But certainly some women have been helped, although more in the sense of feeling more relaxed and open about sex, rather than in the 'treatment of orgasmic dysfunction' so called. Some women may be so traumatised

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they wish'**

by their negative sexual conditioning that they require a great deal of time and attention to work through this. A sympathetic therapist (or a friend) may be helpful. But to turn to psychotherapy as a first, and often a last, resort seems to me to be expensive and usually worthless. Even the Masters and Johnson clinics which are starting over here tend to be far more helpful to men than women. They emphasise the goal of achieving orgasm through intercourse (penetration) rather than exploring the other techniques which are more suited to women's sexual anatomy.

These groups may work for young women who have grown up in a climate of sexual experimentation and whose sexual habits are not so set. Surely older women need more intensive help, or are perhaps beyond help?

The women who attend these workshops vary tremendously in age and backgrounds. It is certainly not too late for older women to learn how to have orgasms; on the contrary the longer the years of missing out, the stronger the motivation for making changes. Many women in their twenties and

thirties are still waiting for their ideal lover to show them how, or just keep hoping that an orgasm will some day happen to them.

The adjustment needed in the sexual relationship may be greater the longer it has continued. When a forty eight years old woman explained to her husband what kind of stimulation she needed to reach orgasm, he objected that he was too old to change. Her response to this, which worked, was to say: 'We've tried it your way for twenty six years, why not give my way a try?' If this sounds flippant, I would emphasise both the amount of courage it takes to make this change, and the revolutionary effect on the total relationship as a result of the increased competence and confidence the woman feels. For this woman, and for many others, her decision to take her sexual life in her hands marked the start of a new life.

Only heterosexual women have these problems. Lesbians would neither need, nor be interested in these groups.

About a quarter of the women in the groups are lesbian or bisexual. I was most surprised by this since I had accepted the myth that lesbians were by definition terrific lovers with none of my sexual hang-ups. (This made me feel more guilty about not being gay when, in 1970, the pressure was on all 'good feminists' to come out and affirm their sexual allegiance. After all, how could one expect satisfactory sexual relationships with men!) This kind of myth put performance pressures on gay women, many of whom felt insecure and confused about their sexuality and have been delighted to participate in the groups. Since the basic aim of this approach is to encourage each person to take more responsibility for her own sexuality, and to start to define it for herself, women can benefit whatever their sexual bias and way of life. Incidentally, women come together who would not otherwise have occasion to meet, nor to share such personal experiences, so the groups perform a general consciousness raising function.

I was often asked by American friends who knew I was returning to London how this work would be received by English women. Perhaps, they surmised with true Berkeley chauvinism, it would be altogether too 'far out'. The first time I spoke about it at a meeting, there was a pause and I thought they were to be proved right. But after the initial intake of breath, many women expressed interest and were keen to know if groups existed here or whether we could start one. Visits to the North of England confirmed this impression. To my knowledge, no such groups do exist here yet, and there would appear to be a definite need. (Some of the institutes in California are funded by the State; but I can't see the NHS doing this at the moment.) As a preliminary, it would be helpful to hear from readers on this subject. It might be possible for *Spare Rib* to publish more detailed information about the techniques used, and to help people obtain some of the excellent publications which are not yet available here. So we invite you to send us your comments.O

NEWS

HIGH RISE HIGH RENT

"All the women here are on nerve tablets", said a woman from Haigh Heights, one of three tower blocks known as the Ugly Sisters. "In other places people borrow butter or sugar from their neighbours. Here we ask for a pill."

Throughout the summer in Liverpool women tenants in particular have been protesting against the conditions in which they have to live. When rents went up in June tenants took action. They've been on rent strike, demonstrated and occupied the housing offices to force the council to take notice of their demands.

The Liverpool City Council is Liberal-controlled. They decided to increase the rents by up to £2. Part of the reason for such enormous increases — which nearly doubled the rent for some tenants — was that the Liberals had campaigned in the elections around the slogan of taking a penny off the rates. They didn't add that the money would have to be found from somewhere else to pay the bills. The government is cutting back on grants to local authorities and has just lopped £295 million off grants to councils to improve existing housing.

Liverpool decided to find the money by putting up the rents. The properties which had the biggest increases were mainly inner-city tenements and tower blocks, and old walk-ups — the worst housing in Liverpool.

"No major repairs have been done in the last three years", said tenants from old tenements



Windsor Street tenants demonstrating at Liverpool Town Hall in August.

in the Southern Neighbourhood, "they've just left us to deteriorate, and the state of the tenements, it's awful. You'll get the stairs falling in, and you have to wait for months before they come and fix them. I think they're doing what they like with us, they don't seem to care at all. These places hadn't been wired for 38 years and it was unsafe. We had to fight for it to be done after there was four fires because of it."

"There's rats running round in packs of a night and day time. We're overrun with them. We approached the Health Department about it and they said they couldn't put poison down in case kids or dogs played with it."

"We asked what about putting men down, but they didn't have the time or the money to do that — instead they got us four rat traps, two for one block and one each for the other two, and said you catch the rats for us and we'll come and take them away. And we're paying £5.36 a week to live in a place that's overrun with rats and they want us to catch them!"

Fires in the rubbish shute

A woman tried to describe what it was like to live in the Ugly Sisters: "It's nerve-wracking, your nerves are on edge all the while. You don't know what's going to happen next, between floodings and fires in the rubbish shute, and the lifts never working."

"I think the best thing they could do with these blocks is to pull them down, because they're a disgrace, an eyesore. They were just thrown up. They weren't even made right in the beginning."

Paying off moneylenders

Faced with appalling housing conditions and no prospect of immediate rehousing (although there are 3,000 empty houses and flats on Merseyside) tenants were outraged that they were expected to pay more to live in slums.

They also knew that paying more wouldn't improve conditions at all. 90p in the £ of the increase goes to pay the moneylenders. Nationally government and local council interest payments are £1,152 million; by 1980 they will be £3,000 million. Between 1963 and 1971 the cost of building a council house doubled. And doubled again between 1971 and this year. For Liverpool Corporation this means a debt of £16½ million, which is why they fixed the rents so high. Thousands refused to pay the increase.

"We can't and we won't pay!"

Most of the people who came to the meetings and demonstrations

WHAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR:

JUNE

Liverpool council voted to impose long-delayed increases of between £1 and £4 to balance the books. In Cantril Farm tenants marched to protest that while housing continues at a snail's pace, scores of houses are standing empty and boarded up for months.

More than 100 tenants from Macbeth Street sat in at the housing office demanding immediate rehousing. Their houses are 100 years old, semi-derelict and with no facilities. When a corporation surveyor came round to persuade the tenants it wasn't that bad he fell through rotten floorboards.

JULY

Tenants held local meetings and decided to withhold rent rises. A city-wide meeting of 500 tenants agreed to fight the increases. Two hundred marched to the Town Hall to present petitions and speak at the City Council meeting. They forced an extraordinary meeting of the housing committee to reconsider raising the rents. At a mass meeting in the stadium, tenants' representatives, councillors and local MPs condemned the rent rises and re-affirmed the decision not to pay. A tenants' committee was formed to co-ordinate all the local activities and to ensure that no area or block of flats on strike was left isolated.

AUGUST

There was uproar at the emergency meeting of the housing committee when the council decided to maintain the increases, which came into force on August 4. The Liverpool Tenants' Co-ordinating Committee organised pickets of rent offices, leafleted estates and held meetings. Tenants from three tower blocks known as the Ugly Sisters demonstrated, demanding immediate rehousing.

SEPTEMBER

Further pickets and demonstrations at the Town Hall. Except in the South End of Liverpool the organised withholding of increases collapsed, though many individual families still won't pay. Threats of eviction were countered by LTCC pressure and mobilisation, so that no families had to face the bailiffs alone.

Tenants in Brunswick Gardens were promised that rehousing would begin by the end of this year — but only if they had clear rent books. The block had already been sold to a housing association for £500,000, so people thought the corporation could let them live rent-free for a few months, especially as they'd paid for the block twice over in rents. And the council should be grateful for getting any rent at all for such slum conditions.

were kids and women who have to bear the brunt of bad conditions and cut back on the house-keeping to find enough money for the rent. In many areas the tenants' committees were dominated by men, and some by community workers who tended to slow down the impetus and limit the demands. Many women were angry that they didn't get more support from the men, even though by organising together as women they gained a lot of confidence and realised the importance of collective action.

"The women are terrified of their husbands", explained a woman from Portland Gardens. "They say pay and that's it. If you've got the men saying don't you pay it, if you've got their backing, it makes all the difference. Once the men hand the money over that's their responsibility finished, isn't it. And if anything happens when you haven't paid, it'll all fall on you, won't it? The men aren't interested — there'd be more of them at the meetings if they were. They don't bother. It's all women."

The hidden rent strike

The Liverpool rent rises coincided with the introduction of the government's policies on wage restraint and savage cuts in the social services and public spending. The rent rises in Liverpool are part of the general attack by the ruling class which means we have to work harder, earn less and pay more to survive.

Workingclass council tenants are realising that they have to fight for improved conditions and against any policy which means a cut in living standards. But organising in the community is often difficult and demoralising; the gains are not immediate — in Liverpool the tenants haven't succeeded in reducing the rents.

During the rent strike many women were pointing out that a rent rise is the same as a wage cut, but there was very little link-up between struggles in the community and at work. There's still the attitude that if you can't pay the rent you're a failure, but this is changing fast as women realise that the only way to afford to pay for the things they need to live on is by taking it out

of the rent.

Withholding the increase or falling into arrears is itself a victory, so long as no-one is evicted. It means more money for the women and kids, less for the government.

In Merseyside alone £3,200,000 is owing in arrears. Nationally the figure is £26 million from the 'hidden' rent strike. Vast sums are owing on other bills too — £65 million on unpaid electricity bills, £60 million for gas.

The situation is going to get worse for tenants and housewives unless they fight to get what they need — against cut-backs, rent rises, deterioration of facilities. The militancy of the struggles in Liverpool against the increases is an indication of how workingclass tenants, particularly women, will respond as rents and prices continue to rocket while wages and social services are cut back.

Off the sidelines

A woman from Scotland Road put it this way: "I nearly fell through the floor when I got the rent increase note the other week. £1.90 a week extra we are expected to pay. I knew as soon as I read it that I wouldn't be paying it. I can just barely manage to pay the rent as it is and then I have to miss a few weeks when the kids need new shoes or something. All I can say is that they will have to take the increase out of my face, because I just can't afford it, and that's that."

"One thing I'm really made up about though is that over the last year or so, more and more women around here have stopped dashing off to the local moneylender in a sweat to borrow the money to pay off their rent arrears. They are just saying 'Oh fuck it, I can't afford two things at once and I know which one's got to go!'"

"I've always stood on the sidelines when a few people around here have attempted to fight the corpy in the past, even on things like the closing of the wash-house or road safety... I must admit I used to say 'Oh I don't know why they bother, you can't win.'"

"But since my mate dragged me along with her to march with a lot of angry women to the Municipal Annexe for a housing meeting on the rent increases, and seeing my own mates who had had the same attitude as me actually sitting on the floor and refusing to move when they were threatened with being thrown out, and heckling — I've realised you've got to put up a fight for the things you need and want." □

Merseyside Big Flame Women's Group

INTERNATIONAL WOMENS YEAR BERLIN: A CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE

The World Congress for International Women's Year ended recently in Berlin, German Democratic Republic. It brought together nearly 2,000 delegates from 140 countries, including a delegation of 41 from Britain, and met in nine commissions for a week, examining all aspects of women's condition.

Part of its function was to follow up and help bring to fruition the decisions taken at the earlier governmental Mexico Conference on International Women's Year (Spare Rib 39).

But this was a congress of the people, as Freda Brown, President of the Congress and newly elected President of the Women's International Democratic Federation, put it. "This is the era of the mass organisation", she said. It is the era when the power of public opinion can be brought fully into play."

That public opinion would be mobilised to ensure that the decisions taken in Berlin would not remain on paper only.

A feature of the Congress was that it took place in a socialist country, and the country which, by general agreement, has the most advanced social legislation



JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

BATTERED WOMEN OCCUPY RICHMOND HOTEL

50 homeless women and children from Chiswick Women's Aid occupied the 100-room Palm Court Hotel in Richmond, Surrey at dawn on November 8. The hotel has been empty for ten years. For the last three it has been owned by Goodhews, the multi-million pound brewers' group.

Chiswick Women's Aid was set up four years ago. They have operated an open-door policy for 36 people, but the refuge has consistently sheltered more than 100 people.

Two months ago, the local Labour-Controlled council stopped their £10,000 annual grant because, they said, the refuge had become a fire hazard.

concerning women, and facilities for child care.

During the Congress Angela Davis said that through gaining an insight into life in the GDR, "Many women in the US delegation who are not socialists will be more convinced that the final emancipation of women will only come when monopoly capitalism is overturned and a socialist society established."

There were many of the British delegations who were surprised and impressed. It was a very broad delegation, with representatives from the Town-

women's Guild, Oxfam, church organisation, trade unions and the Communist Party, and the feminists movement. The organisers had been the National Assembly of Women.

The Congress provided a forum for women of different viewpoints. Women from the capitalist world met women from socialist countries, from underdeveloped countries and from the national liberation movements — and they experienced each other's solidarity with their struggle.

New perspectives on women's struggle were discovered. In the commissions the demands more pertinent to women in the

developed capitalist countries were amalgamated with those of women struggling against polygamy, and the tyranny of toil in the fields.

For the British delegation there were some salutary moments, when speakers detailed their continuing struggle against British imperialism. An overriding experience was the meeting and close cooperation with the Irish delegation — the result was that almost all British delegates who contributed in the commissions called for a bill of rights in Ireland, a call which made an impact on all the women at the Congress.

David Coutzee



Delegates from Oman



Irish delegation

PHOTOGRAPHS DAVID COUTZEE

NEWS

The first national conference of the National Abortion Campaign, held in London during October, voted to fight for Free Abortion On Demand — A Woman's Right To Choose.

900 women and a few men, representing women's groups, Trade Union branches, trades councils, political organisations and local NAC groups — of which there are 85 in the country — spent two days tussling over the aims of the campaign, its structure and future actions.

Launched last March after James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill passed its second reading in Parliament, NAC organised a nation-wide campaign throughout the spring and summer to defeat White's Bill, under which 80% of currently legal abortions would have become illegal.

Since the Bill fell automatically at the end of the last Parliamentary session — much of the evidence submitted to the House of Commons Select Committee set up to consider White's Bill could not be discussed in the time — NAC's objectives have extended.

"The aim of NAC", announces the official Conference reportback, "is to build a mass national campaign to defeat all restrictive legislation on the basis of a woman's right to choose whether to continue or terminate a pregnancy."

"The campaigning slogan shall be Free Abortion On Demand — A Woman's Right To Choose — to establish in law a woman's right to make the decision to have an abortion without any medical or legal restrictions and to establish this in practice."

NAC's Demands

To this end NAC demands that the Government instruct the DHSS

- *To make abortion on demand available throughout the NHS.
- *To incorporate private clinics into the NHS, and all abortions — including those on non-resident women, to be performed free of charge.
- (NAC will oppose all restrictions on foreign women receiving free abortions on demand on the NHS in Britain.)
- *To increase facilities for birth control, by setting up centres which will provide counselling on all aspects of abortion, contraceptives and out-patient abortion.
- *To ban all forced sterilisation

accompanying abortion.

*Funds for research into abortion, contraception and pregnancy testing techniques to be provided, and GPs and health workers to be trained in abortion techniques.

*All anti-abortion doctors holding positions in which they can directly or indirectly obstruct a woman seeking an abortion be removed from such posts.

Open Membership

Membership of NAC will be open to all who agree with its aims. Local NAC groups, political organisation, trade unions and women's groups will pay £3 annual affiliation fee into central funds. Each group will then receive a year's subscription to the NAC newsletter and be entitled to voting rights in National Planning Meetings.

Affiliation of political organisations, with the exception of national mass organisations like the Labour Party, should affiliate on the basis of one vote per organisation.

Local groups, to be based on boroughs, towns, workplaces, schools, NHS and trade unions, will have representatives on all national structures.

Autonomy was guaranteed by a decision that local groups "shall decide the best way of building the campaign in their area, including the calling of regional actions and conferences".

National Meetings

National Conferences are to take place once a year, open to all who support NAC aims, with voting by simple majority. National demonstrations and any other national actions must be decided by a clear majority at national conference or national planning meeting.

National Planning Meetings will be held at least every two months, open to all who wish to attend — affiliated bodies should send at least one representative. Voting will be by simple majority of those present.

Major action proposals requiring support of the mass of the membership and proving contentious should be voted upon on the basis of *one mandated vote* per affiliated body acceptable in form of telephone, postal, or delegate.

The Steering Committee — hitherto an ad hoc grouping, much criticised by local groups for its remoteness and manipulation by left groups — will remain open to all women in agreement with NAC aims who wish to concentrate activities in national work. It must meet at least twice a month and be responsible for national office, staffing, newsletter publicity and so on.

ABORTION CONFERENCE Structure and Feminism

Feminism and NAC

In a conference designed to formulate specific action proposals very little time was allocated to discussion of the current political situation and the types of restrictive legislation which might be proposed in the next parliamentary session.

The Conference reportback recognises this difficulty but remains defensive. "Most of the time was taken up with discussion and voting on resolutions and there was only one workshop session. Although the conference may well be seen as having been confused and fraught with wrangles between some of the groups there, the nature of the discussions and the time taken to decide upon basic issues is not surprising in view of the fact

that this is the first conference of this kind and many things had to be sorted out.

"Indeed, the fact that so many resolutions were put to conference proves the active interest that groups from all over the country have in NAC".

Local groups are indeed actively interested in NAC, but not solely in the campaign's structure. Much of the alienation and sense of futility at the conference were rooted in a political discontent with the priority given to the structure resolutions. Representatives of a variety of mutually incompatible left groups — some inactive in the campaign until very recently — fought it out at the microphone while local groups felt progressively estranged and enraged.

The National Abortion Cam-

CONFERENCE: Feminism

campaign grew out of the women's movement and old-established pressure groups like the Abortion Law Reform Association. Its local strength has been consistently feminist. Questions of consciousness and of women's varying responses to street theatre, petitioning, public meetings and newspaper selling are of particular importance to local groups.

Women's movement conferences exist to explore the politics of our situation as women and to exchange information about struggles in specific areas. Women's liberation conferences must remain sensitive to the varying levels of confidence of those present and thus favour a workshop structure to encourage as many women as possible to talk.

The plenary sessions of the

NAC conference, however, comprised dogmatic harangues on democracy from different left tendencies. Chairing the Sunday morning session, for example, Madeleine Simms said: "I don't know what's going on here. I'm a prehistoric member of the old ALRA and I've been resurrected for this purpose."

The conference divided up equally into about 20 workshops on Saturday afternoon to discuss the resolutions proposed, and it was here that women were able to talk in a more open way. Opinions on changing the slogan (the campaigning slogan up to the conference had been Abortion: A Woman's Right To Choose) were divided in the workshop that we were in, but we talked as local activists whose campaigning experience shaped our

political positions:

"We've found in Newcastle that you have to state very clearly what you want *as well as* oppose restrictive legislation. Surely abortion on demand doesn't have to have an aggressive connotation. If you want an abortion, you want one."

"But I don't think abortion on demand is clear," was the response, "because whose demand is it? It doesn't even have to mean a *woman's* right."

"Being one of the great unwashed myself" commented one middle-aged woman, "what you've got to understand is that working class women have been brought up after the war, and have come up with working class morals which were bloody strong. The word abortion *frightens* them. They think that abortion on demand means promiscuity — they think of their young daughters coming home and saying 'Mum, I'm in the club'."

Another working class woman added that, ironically, "the slogan that appeals has a latent feminism: that the *woman* should choose."

Another theme emerged: "With trade unions and trades councils, however — what do we do about the problems that White's Bill includes, like private practice, which sections of the labour movement are concerned about? We all answer that we want abortion on demand on the NHS".

"We found a woman's right to choose useful with *anti-abortion* people on grounds of individual conscience — we're arguing for facilities for choice," stressed another NAC supporter.

This sort of discussion doesn't lead easily to decision-taking but it does at least prompt thought and a concern with the actual reality of a campaigning movement.

You Can't Impose

A resolution which spoke for many women, but was not voted on, came from Southampton NAC: "This conference resolves that the main emphasis of the campaign should be feminist and be directed at all the women whether working in the home or outside. This includes working through women's centres, women's groups, housing estates, social security offices, clinics, nurseries, community and health centres, bingo halls and trade unions."

There was applause when the sister speaking to this resolution commented that "The emphasis yesterday was on working through the unions, which is fair enough. But housework bolsters up capitalism just as much as work outside the home, and conference has ignored this".

Similarly feminists were critical of the Steering Committee's proposal that the main theme of the next International Women's Day march should be abortion. "I think it's appalling", said one during a workshop discussion. "Large numbers of women in the movement don't see abortion as the central issue. I don't think that *any* group of women can decide the central issue on International Women's Day".

As we criticise left groups for their interventionism at this conference so we think NAC must recognise that it cannot impose a structure on a day which, like feminism itself, symbolises and inspires a diversity of struggles.

Parliamentary Session Begins
Parliament's vote on reconvening the Select Committee on Abortion, announced by Minister of Social Services Barbara Castle on October 21, took place after we went to press.

But what is left for the Select Committee to consider, now that White's Bill has fallen? asks ALRA. Nothing except the Bill's most restrictive clauses. Parliament might decide to extend the Committee's terms of reference, and if either a pro or anti MP wins a place in the Private Members Bill ballot and puts up a new abortion Bill, the Committee may well have to take it into consideration.

NAC would oppose this possibility because the anti-abortion majority on the 15-person Select Committee is unlikely to change. MPs will probably argue that the people who have heard all the evidence presented so far should continue on the Committee.

The situation at the moment is complex. The restrictive DHSS circular embodying the recommendations of the Select Committee accepted by Barbara Castle at the end of October is already being put into practice. (The circular makes it illegal for an abortion to be performed after the twentieth week except in a hospital where resuscitation procedures are available.)

But the Parliamentary Labour Party's position is ambiguous. The Labour Party's Conference passed a motion for abortion on request within the NHS — as did the TUC Congress at Blackpool. Yet as a Government minister it is not compulsory for Barbara Castle to act upon these decisions.

Abortion, like homosexuality, is seen as a matter of individual conscience for MPs — hence a free vote. But why should a few hundred individual consciences legislate on women's right to control their bodies?

Jane Noble and Ann Scott
Hackney Abortion Campaign

Handcuffed in Westminster Cathedral: four women demonstrated before Sunday morning mass on October 19. The congregation had been urged to participate in an anti-abortion demonstration that afternoon.

An estimated one million women in roughly seventy countries use an injectable contraceptive called Depo-Provera, and its export from the USA is increasing.

Women in underdeveloped countries are not informed that the drug is on trial, reports Jill Rakusen.

Depo-Provera (depot medroxyprogesterone acetate, from now on referred to as DP) is an injectable contraceptive. It's hot stuff in the commercial and family planning world, with an effectiveness comparable to the Pill without the hassles of having to take one every day. 150 mg can be injected every three months, or more every six months.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) likes it, for "You get people accepting injections more readily than the Pill" and "The women want contraception but they aren't sufficiently motivated to take a pill every day"¹. Since 1968 Upjohn Co, the American manufacturers, have sold over 11 million doses.

Started Life in 1960s

DP has a chequered history. It started life in the 1960s as a drug for the treatment of threatened abortion and for a disease of the womb called endometriosis².

It was quite widely used until in 1974 the American Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) decided that the drug was not only ineffective for either of these problems, but it could also cause virilization of female fetuses if taken during early pregnancy.

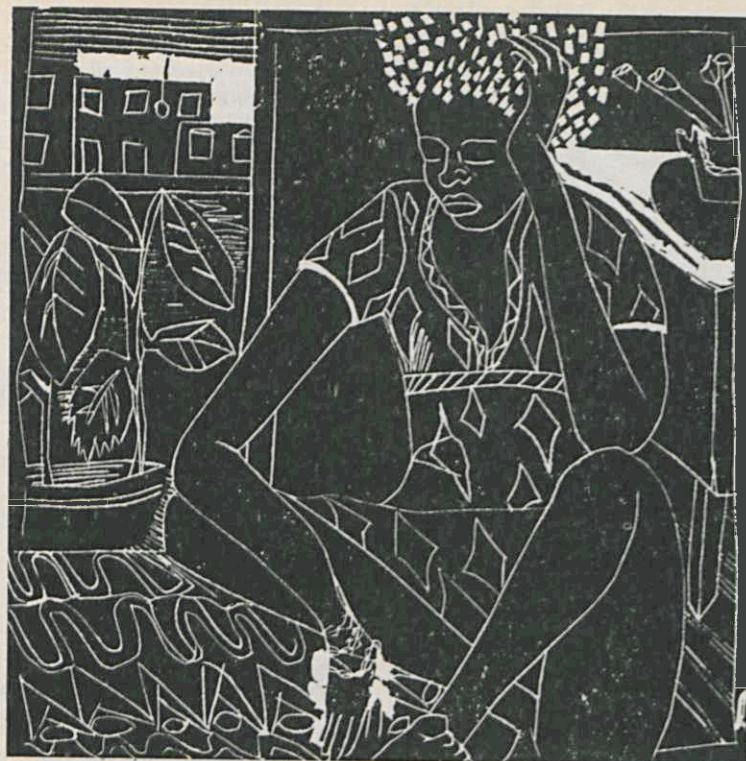
In the mid-1960s trials began using DP as a contraceptive. In 1971 the central medical committee of the IPPF decided to allow certain family planning associations to use it for clinical trials under the supervision of the medical department which would monitor results and side effects.

In the same year, it was found that DP could cause breast cancer in beagles. The oral form was then banned.

But the FDA allowed clinical trials of the injectable form to continue, reasoning that there were alternatives to the oral form, but that DP was the only highly effective injectable. Some reasoning.

FDA Pressed On

Although some people were arguing within the FDA that DP should be banned altogether, or certainly as a contraceptive until the safety question was adequately resolved, the FDA



DEPO-PROVERA 3rd World women not told this contraceptive is on trial

pressed on.

In October 1973 it declared its intention to allow the use of DP as a contraceptive in certain 'limited' circumstances, provided a check was kept on the women and doctors involved. These were (a) when women refused or were 'unable to accept the responsibility demanded by other contraceptive methods'; (b) when they were incapable or unwilling to tolerate other hormonal contraception; or (c) when they had 'repeated failures' with other methods.

In May 1974 the FDA's hand was stayed by a US Congressional Sub-committee which had been holding public hearings on experimental drugs, and had found an association (though no proof as to cause) between DP and cervical cancer.

In September 1974 the FDA tried again, having decided that the questions raised concerning delays in the resumption of fertility and breast cancer beagles were 'not sufficiently serious' to prevent the release of the drug in specific circumstances.

So the FDA published regula-

tions and guidelines which required the manufacturer to provide informational leaflets which the woman was supposed to read before giving her 'informed consent' to the injections.

In effect, the FDA was taking the unprecedented step of requiring the woman herself to decide on the safety of DP.

However, the Chairman of the Congressional Sub-committee again stepped in and managed to embarrass the FDA into delaying its approval yet again by predicting that 'many women may be irreparably injured'. Thus, to date, the FDA has suspended its approval.

Rigid Requirements Unsatisfied
Other countries are being more cautious than the USA because of suspicion concerning long-term effects.

In Britain, for example, the Committee on Safety of Medicines has not licensed DP as a contraceptive since its rigid requirements concerning long-term toxicity trials and high quality clinical trials are not satisfied. (There has in fact been one study of its use as a contra-

ceptive here: ten women were given one injection each and the trial was then stopped).

But while the American watchdogs sit pondering, the USA is exporting increasing amounts of DP for contraceptive purposes. An estimated one million women now use it in roughly 70 countries.

It is particularly widely used in 'underdeveloped' countries, where in fact it was also first tested.

Some European countries also use it (eg Holland and Belgium) but on nothing like the scale of the underdeveloped countries. It would be interesting to compare such use; as yet I have been unable to do this.

The IPPF has been using DP since 1971, and it has not changed its attitude in the light of recent events. It is now the largest international supplier of DP, while at the same time acknowledging that the drug is still 'under clinical trial'. In 1974 its largest shipments went to Thailand, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Kenya and Costa Rica.

The United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) has given the UN Children's Fund a grant to enable it to distribute DP, and the World Health Organisation uses it, having made a 'careful analysis of the relative risks and benefits' (risks and benefits to whom?).

On the other hand, USAID does not use the drug because it does not supply drugs not approved by the FDA! Although Sweden has supplied DP abroad, it has stopped doing so because of reservations about side effects. Malaysia, which previously got its supplies from Sweden, will now obtain them from the UNFPA!

In Northern Thailand, 31,780 women have been given DP between 1970-74. There are few programmes where DP has been used on such a large scale and therefore this programme has been used to study 'acceptance', of side effects etc. Bear in mind that DP is still on clinical trial.

Women Are Not Informed

Women in underdeveloped countries are not informed that the drug is on trial, and it depends on the individual doctor whether or not side effects are mentioned.

DP can affect the metabolism in similar ways to the Pill. It can raise glucose levels in the blood and can cause side effects ranging from weight gain, vomiting, dizziness, mood changes and headaches to rectal bleeding and lumps on the chest.

Blood clotting disorders have also been noted, but the FDA is cagey about whether DP can actually cause these (for a long time it displayed similar cagey-

UP FROM UNDER, NEW YORK 1973

ness about the Pill in this respect).

In some studies, 25% of women stop using DP because of side effects. Disruption of menstrual bleeding occurs in over 50% of users. Bleeding can be prolonged, heavier, unpredictable or completely absent, the latter being more likely to occur as the injections continue.

Unpredictable or unpleasant bleeding can make the method thoroughly unacceptable, so oestrogen is often given orally for 7-10 days on top of DP in order to 'solve' the problem. Experiments are being made with combining oestrogen in the injection.

Possibility Of Infertility

While the more serious possible side effects of breast or cervical cancer have yet to be proven, the possibility of infertility has certainly been shown to exist.

The FDA Drug Bulletin for September 1974 found that return of fertility after use of DP was 'variable and unpredictable, and permanent inability to conceive has been reported occasionally'. (NB So far it has been shown that in most users fertility has returned within 24 months).

Despite the importance of this issue, very little research has been done on it. Nevertheless, in some countries concern about permanent infertility is such that DP is restricted to older women with completed families.

But in others, such as Thailand, the drug is being given to more and more young women (the mean age in 1975 was 27).

More To Be Said

I have only been able to skim the surface of the DP saga. There is much more to be said concerning, for example, the lack of published studies on DP and cervical cancer, the way trials are conducted, the work — or lack of it — on offspring of DP users, the relationship between Upjohn and the FDA etc.

An Upjohn representative testified to the FDA that the dilemmas posed "can only be resolved by exposing humans who have a high risk potential for benefit".

In other words, clinical trials — or experimentation — are being carried out on thousands of women without their informed consent because someone else has decided that the benefits outweigh the risks.

Jill Rakusen, with help from Julia Segal and Sue Barlow

Notes

- 1 Quote from a phone conversation with an IPPF doctor.
- 2 Not to be confused with endometrial cancer — for which this drug is apparently effective.

LESBIANISM & SELF-HELP: RADIO CUTS

Two cuts were demanded by BBC Radio London in a 90-minute women's liberation programme broadcast on November 14.

A description of medical self-help was disallowed because "Radio London feels it would upset people, and that if it had been heard it should have been

followed by a discussion between medical authorities".

Towards the end of the programme an extract from a novel was cut because the station felt it would be "distasteful to a number of listeners".

Of the three paragraphs, which described lesbian love-making, the author said over the air: "I used no obscene words unless clitoris is an obscene word. In effect their censorship reinforces an area of darkness".

The programme, prepared over three months by a collective based on the Women's Liberation

Workshop, began with a statement emphasising that the organisers did not represent the women's movement but were part of it.

Tapes had been made by a consciousness-raising group in Clapham, Women's Report Collective, the National Abortion Campaign, the Rape Counselling and Crisis Centre, Gay Wives and Mothers Collective, a women writers group, and the Children's Community Centre, with poetry, unaccompanied folk song and rock music from the Stepney Sisters.

WIRES NOW WORKING THREE DAYS A WEEK



The first six-monthly meeting of the Women's Liberation Movement National Information Service was held in Leeds recently.

We decided at the meeting to change our name to WIRES — Women's Information and Referral Service — much less of a mouthful than WLMNIS, and reasonably descriptive of what we actually do.

We've also got an office at last — a room in a building housing other groups. This took a lot of repair and redecorating, and meant that we had a huge backlog of mail by the time we'd settled in. It also explains why the second newsletter was very late.

We still have no equipment (though a women's group has offered to get some for us) so we have to borrow typewriters, duplicator etc. There are five workers now, four working one day a week and the other 2½. It was agreed at the meeting that this last worker should be paid £3 a week as she couldn't keep going otherwise.

So the office will be womaned all day Monday, Thursday, and Friday, plus Tuesday afternoons.

We haven't got a phone because we didn't think we had the funds to justify the expense. Although we always quoted a phone number in the past, very few people ever rang, and their queries could have been dealt with by post.

Extensive Address List

We have been dealing with enquiries about addresses of groups, where to get speakers on abortion, lists of women's centres etc. Information has also been pouring in about group activities, conferences, campaigns, books and local newsletters. We're building up a really extensive address list and loads of useful files.

Please keep sending stuff in, and also let us know of any changes of address. We'd rather you specified what information or extracts from your newsletter you want to appear in the WIRES newsletter.

We want both information and opinion to be included in the newsletter. But the meeting agreed that events should take first priority: conferences, campaigns, demonstrations; then information: new publications, reports of activities (including those of women who don't see themselves as part of the

Women's Movement); then opinions; and last of all reprints of information from other publications.

The size of the newsletter will be determined by the cost of paper and postage. We intend to send out a questionnaire form with the next issue, to remind people of what information to include when they write in.

£260 In The Bank

At the moment we've got £260 in the bank. We estimate that the newsletter will cost £15 per issue to produce and send out, and should appear twice per calendar month in future. We pay £2 a week rent and £3 to one of the workers. Up till now we've had no heating or electricity, so we've had no bills, but we will from now on.

Overall we reckon it'll cost us about £15 a week to keep going — BUT this means that only one worker is being paid, and only a pittance at that. Subscriptions are still trickling in, but we do need more if we're to provide a good service to the movement. We've got the information and woman-power to do it, but we need the money — so sisters, please subscribe!

Subscriptions are £3 per year for individuals, £3 for 6 newsletters for groups (this is to cover the cost of the information service).

We/I want a 3 monthly/annual subscription to the WIRES newsletter. We/I accept that this covers the work of the Information Service as well

Name
Address
Date
Amount sent

Please return to WIRES, c/o 30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2*

* This is our new permanent address and supercedes all previous addresses

* The WIRES newsletter should be the co-ordinating newsletter for the British Women's Movement, as agreed at the Manchester National Conference in April 1975.

PENSION SEXISM

It pays to be a man if you are disabled — especially if you want to get married and have children.

Any doubts about this vanished on November 20, when the Government began paying a new disability pension.

Ironically it has chosen International Women's Year to pay a benefit which discriminates blatantly against Britain's 40,000 disabled housewives.

The non-contributory invalidity pension is aimed to help all disabled people who have never worked, or have paid too few national insurance contributions to qualify for normal invalidity benefit.

Before now they have had to bear unaided the enormous cost of disablement, unless their condition was bad enough to need full-time nursing, or claim national assistance.

All men and single women receive the benefit from November 20. Married women will have to wait until 1978 at the earliest, says the Department of Health and Social Security, because of the difficulty identifying them. It will not be backdated.

DIG, the Disablement Income Group, which has fought for a better deal for women, says it could quickly identify many cases of real need.

It also points out that five years ago, the Government commissioned the Melia Harris survey into disablement which concluded that 25,000 disabled mothers with children of school age were having difficulty. A start, says DIG, could be made immediately on them.

Failure to identify the beneficiaries is not often used as a reason for delaying benefit. Many other social security payouts are still not being claimed by all the people eligible.

Cannot Do Housework

There is another reason for the delay. Disabled wives will have

to prove not only that they cannot work but that they cannot also do housework.

Many disabled women pride themselves on helping around the house, however, thereby relieving some of the pressure their condition puts on the rest of the family.

Do this in 1978, says the Government, and you can kiss your pension goodbye. Apart from the disincentive to women who need encouragement to fight disability, how is their ability to do housework to be tested?

Not surprisingly, it is these "criteria" which are holding up payment. Presumably Government experts more used to devising means tests and income

tax questions are having to decide whether washing-up constitutes a bar to pension rights and if so, how they can test this.

A third discrimination concerns extra payments for dependants. From November 20 married men can claim extra for wives and children. Disabled wives, when they eventually become eligible, will be unable to claim anything extra.

Men, says the DHSS, are normally the breadwinners and this is why they are paid for dependants. But by definition anyone who applies for a non-contributory pension cannot have been a breadwinner.

Paul Corley

BUZZ GOODBODY: A CELEBRATION



SALLY FRASER

Buzz Goodbody and her work in the theatre will be celebrated at an Entertainment in Words and Music at 8pm, Sunday December 7, Aldwych Theatre, London.

Buzz Goodbody, who was found dead at her Islington home in April of this year, was the first Artistic Director of The Other Place.

Friends and colleagues taking part include actors Ben Kingsley, Janet Suzman, Patrick Stewart and Nicol Williamson, with songs and music from Bobby Campbell.

Tickets will be £2 each, all seats unreserved and unnumbered obtainable from the box offices of the Aldwych or Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon.

Proceeds will go towards a fund to create a Buzz Goodbody Director's award for the annual National Union of Students Drama Festival.

Buzz Goodbody, holding the giant deodorant, in a women's liberation street theatre, March 1971.

VALUING TRUTH AND FREE EXPRESSION

Lord Houghton, Renee Short MP and Maureen Colquhoun MP are among those sponsoring an appeal for the legal expenses incurred by *The Freethinker*.

This monthly journal resisted demands for an apology and compensation made by Michael Litchfield and Susan Kentish, authors of the anti-abortion book *Babies For Burning*, quoted extensively by supporters of James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

The book was unfavourably reviewed in *The Freethinker* in January. Two months later the *Sunday Times* published a comprehensive expose of the book alleging that Michael Litchfield's claim — sworn on oath — that he had won a Pulitzer Prize for journalism was unfounded.

It now appears that Litchfield and Kentish do not intend to pursue their claim.

However, this unfulfilled threat has cost *The Freethinker* over £200. With a small circulation and no advertising revenue, they hope that "people who value truth and the right of free expression will respond generously to the appeal".

The Freethinker, 698 Holloway Road, London N19, tel: 01-272 1266.

DAY CARE FIRST

After two years of struggle by women members of ATTI (Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions) and by students, Kingsway — Princeton College will be the first College of Further Education in Inner London to provide day-care facilities for children of staff and students.

The nursery is being financed by the Camden Council of Social Services, who will provide £500 in salaries for the first six months.

It is now official ATTI policy to support campaigns for creches in colleges.

Women's Struggle Notes

p a m P. A. M. Trust
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BPAS

CAMDEN: 'WOMEN COUNCILLORS MAKE NO DIFFERENCE'

The Working Women's Charter, a grass-roots campaign based on ten demands for women at home and work, has been taken up by women — and men — in yet another London borough.

A large and angry crowd in Camden's Irish Centre in October pledged itself to the setting up of an active Camden charter group to concentrate initially on fighting cuts in public spending.

The meeting had been called by the women's sub-committee of the borough's trades council, which like many others, has endorsed the charter's demands.

The sub-committee hopes now to have attracted enough support from both within and without the trades union network to turn itself into a charter group, loosely affiliated to the trades council. Women in Islington and Hackney have achieved this important, though inevitably uneasy coexistence with their trades councils.

Discussion centred almost exclusively on fighting cuts, the scene for which had been set by Broadside Mobile Theatre's incisive International Women's Year Show — a roundup of how women have been exploited as never before in 1975.

A couple of Camden councillors including the velvet-clad deputy mayoress, Dr. Georgina Bennett, tried to persuade their sisters (or was it themselves?) that passing laws, setting up commissions and electing women to Westminster would actually change the balance of power. The meeting groaned with a scepticism that was borne out later when she clambered into a chauffeur-driven car.

Meanwhile, back with real life, women told of their problems in combining a badly-paid job with bringing up children when there weren't enough nursery places to go round. Camden Council came in for a lot of criticism for cutbacks which people felt would affect women first and foremost.

"We want another Clay Cross," declared Colin Smith of the Trades Council. "We want to see a refusal of the council to implement cuts. If councillors are against cuts they should put their feet where their mouths are and support our fight."

Council's Sneaky Methods
The meeting was unanimous

that Camden could not be absolved from responsibility on the grounds that central government was forcing cuts down its unwilling throat. On top of everything else the council was sneaky in its methods, claimed Irene Brennan, also of the Trades Council. For example, nursery provision had been restricted by the doubling of charges to £1.80 a day.

In her view, it would not make a blind bit of difference if there were more women councillors. "No decision of any importance is made at a council meeting anyway," she added. Everyone agreed the important thing was for council workers to organise with consumers of council services to oppose cuts where they occurred. And it was vital to research why they were being made. "We must question why the money is not there," said one speaker. "What happens to the wealth that working people are producing?"

Although the meeting had been organised by the trades council, the local centre of the trade union movement, there was strong feeling amongst feminists present that a charter group should exist for non-unionised women as well.

But despite the obviousness of this demand and its importance to the Working Women's Charter, a male Young Socialist insisted on interpreting it as a threat to the labour movement. He was not allowed to get very far.

Lucy Hodges

For further information about the charter, and how to set up your own local campaign, contact Liz Hambleton on 690-5518.

TRADE UNIONS CRITICISE TUC ARTICLE

Criticism of the article 'Working Women's Charter: Not Just A Paper Document' (*Spare Rib* 41) has come from trade unionists who felt the labour movement was inaccurately attacked for inactivity on women's questions.

They stress important resolutions on abortion passed at this year's conferences. In March the TUC Women's Conference called for free abortion on request within the NHS; the TUC Annual Congress in September, representing 10 million trade unionists, passed the same resolution.

The Labour Party Conference also demanded abortion on request within the NHS.

COVENTRY: FROM MIDDLE AGES TO PRESENT DAY

Coventry Exhibition

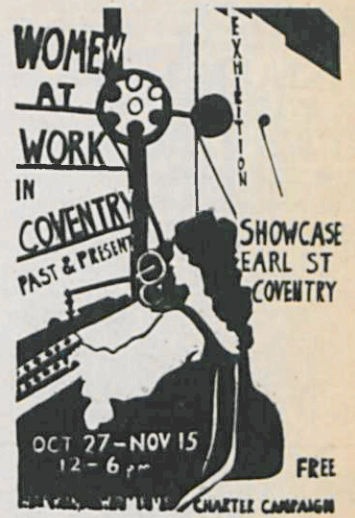
In November the Coventry Working Women's Charter group put on an exhibition "Women at Work in Coventry, Past and Present", open every day in the centre of town.

It looked at women's work from the Middle Ages (when women could enter guilds on an equal footing to men, register as apprentices, train for 5-7 years, then open workshops of their own and take on apprentices) to the present day — the types of jobs women have done, how this has related to their unpaid work in the home, and what sort of education they have received.

Prints, pictures, photographs and models illustrated local history and industry — women weaving narrow silk ribbons in the seventeenth century, women at work in the Courtaulds factory and the GEC Stoke Plant at the turn of this century.

Up to date information about women's situation in Coventry showed the lack of nursery facilities (450 places in 9 nurseries — no more than in 1942 — for 29,000 children under 5), the unequal pay.

The group produced a pamphlet to go with the exhibition, still available from them at 96 Three Spires Avenue, Coventry.



Women at Work poster

CHARTER TO INCLUDE LESBIANS DEMAND?

Gay workers met London members of the Working Women's Charter Campaign in mid-November to discuss a closer working relationship, following suggestions that the Charter be amended to include the 6th demand of the women's movement — an end to all discrimination against lesbians.

A first London Gay Workers Conference in October had discussed the recently-drafted Gay Workers Charter (*Spare Rib* 37) and wanted to learn from the WWC's experiences in working through discussion groups, political meetings and union motions.

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

A DOCUMENTARY BY MIDGE MACKENZIE

The stirring history of the Militant Suffragettes: the voices, the faces, the deeds, the memories, the personal testimony of the remarkable women who fought — and won — the battle for the vote. This beautifully produced book tells the story in the Suffragette's own words and stunning contemporary photographs, cartoons and newspaper cuttings.



Penguin paperback £3.50
Allen Lane hardcover £7.75



NURSES DEMAND HOSPITAL NURSERY

Nurses at Highcroft Hospital, Birmingham, who made history last year by being the first nurses to take strike action, are demanding that nursery facilities be provided at the hospital.

The NUPE branch secretary stated that many women are

being forced to pay at least £15 a week for childminders, when it would be quite simple for a house nearby to be converted into a nursery.

The administration's attitude: "When resources are available we shall consider the provision of a purpose-built creche for about 30 children". But with the present cutbacks in NHS spending the resources will never be available until hospitals are forced to treat nursery facilities as the priority they are for many women workers.

Brum Women's Paper

PATTERSON ON CHILD CARE

Child care facilities should be financed by a consortium of companies if local authorities cannot provide enough, said Ms Marie Patterson, immediate past chairperson of the TUC General Council, at a Family Planning Association talk in November.

If facilities were based within the precincts of individual firms, she continued, "a woman, or man in the case of a one-parent family, would be tied to a job

for this reason alone".

Revealing that there is only one nursery type place for every 193 under-fives in Great Britain, she emphasised that such services should be pressed for through the unions, women's groups and local authorities.

But if a woman wanted to be a stevedore, naval architect or engineer, there was no reason why she should be denied the opportunity simply because she is a woman.

"Women are too complacent in accepting limitation imposed on them. It is up to them to press for the openings if they are interested enough", she said.

MOTHERS HAVE TO GIVE UP WORK

Only 130 of the 385 children at Knighton Field Primary School in Leicester can have school meals, because of the cutbacks in spending on education. And it's the mothers who have to do the extra work.

One mother said, "I've had to give up my work as a waitress to collect my children and give them a meal. So have lots of other women in the area. None of us can afford it."

Women's Struggle Notes

50 HOUSES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

Battered Women

50 houses in Glasgow have at last been allocated to battered women and their children by Glasgow District Council.

This follows an appeal made by women squatting in the West End of the city because there was no room in Interval House or the other overcrowded official homes.

Meanwhile, Leeds Women's Aid may be forced to close, due to lack of money and a refusal of Urban Aid.

WIRES

'ICE MAIDENS FREEZE' (MIRROR)

Feminists in Iceland called a one-day general strike on October 24 that brought much of the country to a virtual halt. "This is not a festival but a serious day off," said strike spokeswoman Gerdur Steinthorsdottir. "We want to show how indispensable we are to our country's economic and national life."

And show it they did, supported by the vast majority of women whether they work in or outside the home. Newspapers, theatres, schools and shops were closed, industry slowed down or in some cases came to a halt, and so many telephone exchanges went unattended that the government announced that it was impossible to conduct official business.

Demanding equal opportunity, and citing data on their "grossly undervalued" work, women left childcare and housework to the men, some of whom spoke out in sympathy with the women.

News from Women's Liberation

The 24-hour Rape Relief Centre in Vancouver, Canada, works on an equal basis with government agencies. Joan Mayne describes its formation two years ago and reports on its medical, legal and educational work now.

In 1973 three women began to do some independent research into rape in Vancouver. They visited the courts, talked to rape victims, police, lawyers and doctors. They read all the available material on rape and how the problem had been tackled elsewhere. A good deal of this material was based on findings in the United States, where several Rape Crisis centres were already in existence.

It soon became clear that doing anything effective about rape involved much more than helping rape victims after the fact. The public needed to be educated. Women needed to learn how to avoid rape or how to come to terms with it afterwards. The law needed reform. The attitudes of all professionals in contact with rape cases needed to be changed.

Three women working in their spare time could not hope to achieve all that needed doing. They needed money to pay for a centre and salaries for full-time workers.

Research Aspect Vital

The Company of Young Canadians provides salaries for a maximum of six months for a young person doing research into a 'worth while community project'. The Rape Crisis Centre met its criteria and it was now possible for one person to devote her full energies to extending the research already done, attending training sessions at the Seattle Rape Crisis Centre, planning the long-term organisation of the centre and acquiring a permanent source of funds.

The research aspect proved vital. For although the group always stressed that the Centre would not be run by lawyers, doctors or psychiatrists, they had to be able to answer such professionals on their own terms. The media became very interested and it was necessary to draw on the research the women had done to present the situation to the public in the clearest and most convincing manner.

They approached all levels of government for money. Eventually the Provincial Health Department, in conjunction with the Attorney General's Office agreed that a centre with six full-time employees be set up. Before this money became

pcl

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COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME 1976

Child Development and Mental Health

A series of three 6 week courses:

Infancy and Pre School Years
Child, School and Community
Adolescence and Society

31st Jan - 13th March
1st May - 12th June
30th October - 11th Dec

Infancy and pre School Years

The course consists of 6 Tuesday evening lectures, 6 Thursday evening workshops and 3 Saturday conferences:

31st January The Needs of Children
21st February Patterns of Disadvantage
13th March Day Care for Under 5's

Further details from Netta Swallow, Short Course Unit, Polytechnic of Central London, 309 Regent St, W1.
Tel: 580 2020 Ext. 221

VANCOUVER RAPE RELIEF

available another Vancouver group funded an office with a phone line.

Volunteer Training

There was no need to advertise for volunteers. For some months women had been offering to help, so once there was a physical centre these 30 women could begin training. They committed themselves to training sessions of three or four hours a week over a period of seven weeks, and to bringing the results of their own research to the meetings.

Although the original three women led the three groups of ten it was a co-operative educational process, that drew on the resources already built up but always extending them. The women covered a wide range in age but it was noticeable that they were all white and reasonably well educated.

In the training sessions rape was considered as a *social problem*, with much discussion of conventional male/female roles as contributing factors. Self-defence, provocative clothing and hitch-hiking were considered as well as relevant aspects of the law and medicine (see leaflet).

Working As A Collective

Women have traditionally engaged in voluntary work. The group felt that volunteer work in the Centre would in part perpetuate a system which does not fully recognise women's work. On the other hand many of the women were already in full-time employment, or had family commitments and could not undertake full-time work at the Centre.

At least one founding member feels that a complete resolution to this situation has yet to be found. It was agreed that the Centre should be a collective responsibility; that everyone connected with it, paid or not, should have an equal say in all decisions. The six salaries were to be rotational: salaries would be allocated for a year and any member of the collective could apply for a year on salary.

Some Ways to

Avoid Needing our Services

Whenever possible, wear non-restrictive clothing so you can run.

Yell loudly if attacked - "Fire!" seems to be the most effective.

Practice memorising license plates and being aware of the people and cars around you.

Self defense tactics can be used to give you an opportunity to escape:

- *do not carry a weapon; it could be used against you
- *poke at eyes, clap hard over the ears, throw anything available in his face
- *scrape your foot down his shin and step hard on his instep
- *carry a small purse-size can of hair-spray without the cap on
- *carry a loud whistle
- *a lit cigarette can be useful as a defense

Remember hitchhiking is a very risky way of travelling. Many men consider sticking out your thumb a symbol of soliciting. If you do hitch:

- *know the license number of the car
- *check the back seat before entering; never get in the back of a two-door car
- *know where the door handle is and get out if necessary; don't wait to be polite
- *never accept a ride with more than one man in the car
- *don't feel embarrassed about refusing a ride if you don't feel comfortable about a situation

Part of the Vancouver Rape Relief leaflet

Running The Centre

Once the first training session was completed, the Centre extended its operations to twenty-four hours a day.

Night calls are put through to the duty volunteers by an answering service. The group's policy is that two people should always go out on a call, one of whom is a salaried member and who continues the work next day and over the next week. Unnecessary upset to a woman already in distress can thus be avoided.

The process is a long one. Helping the woman who has been raped to make a charge, going with her to the hospital,

contacting family or friends, or even finding accommodation and a change of clothes all take time. The worker may need to be present at follow-up interviews with detectives and the preliminary interview with the public prosecutor.

There is often a long interval between the preliminary hearing and the court case; during this time the woman is educated about her legal rights and prepared for what will happen in court. She will get VD and pregnancy tests, and, if necessary, pregnancy/abortion counselling. It is important that the woman does not feel she has been isolated or made an outcast by rape.

Attitudes Of Professionals

Rape Relief Centre workers come into contact with police, lawyers and doctors.

From the outset police working in rural areas were interested and co-operative — they are more involved with their communities and concerned for their long-term well-being than city police, whose community is much less stable. Initially the latter saw the Centre workers as interfering with the course of the law, but experience has taught them that a liaison between themselves and the rape victim helps them greatly.

The woman's distress and incoherence are often mitigated by the presence of a sympathetic and confident woman. From the police point of view the process of dealing with a rape victim is more efficient when a woman from the Centre is present. Many of the calls to the Centre are therefore made by police who ask for someone to help when a woman reports a rape.

Lawyers have always been interested in discussions with the Rape Centre but have shown themselves to be cynical about possible changes in the law and legal procedures. Attitudes in court have changed a little during the last two years, but there is suspicion of a greater self-consciousness, an awareness that rape has become a public issue likely to be reported closely in the media.

Doctors have changed most since the Centre opened. Doctors in emergency wards had no specific procedures for dealing with rape victims and were generally unaccustomed to dealing with a patient as a human being needing follow-up care. Continuing personal contact with rape relief workers has led doctors to investigate proposals about procedures for treating rape victims.

Even so two important changes in the law on rape are now being seriously considered.

On-Going Work

Education and yet more education seems to be the most important on-going aspect of the work apart from the handling of specific cases. A lot of public speaking is undertaken, particularly in schools. The impetus for this has come from the students themselves, though school authorities seem very unwilling to co-operate. But it is rare for the Centre to be asked to speak to a mixed group, and never to a class of boys.

The group is still up against social myths about rape which assume that boys do not need to be educated about it or the male role in it. There is still a belief that rape has to be dealt with after the fact rather than prevented from happening. □

COURSES

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON GOLD-SMITHS' COLLEGE Department of Adult Studies, Community and Youth Work Course. Applications are invited for admission to a two-year full-time course starting in September 1976. The course is designed to train and qualify people for work with adults and young people in a variety of different community settings. The kind of applicant we are looking for will be between 23-43 as a general rule and will have worked for a minimum of two years. They will probably have had some related experience (part-time or voluntary) and may or may not have formal educational qualifications. They will have to be able to learn from their experience; to organise much of their own learning; and be able to work out their own priorities. Selection will be by written application and interview. For further details write to: The Admissions Tutor (SR), University of London Goldsmiths' College, Department of Adult Studies, Community and Youth Work Course, 38 Lewisham Way, New Cross, London SE14 6NP

EVENTS

The Women's Disco is starting up again. Every Sunday night at 8.00, in the upstairs room (side entrance), Festival Inn, Dorset Road, off South Lambeth Road, SW8. 20p entrance. Also, at lunchtime on Sundays, the bar will be open as a drinking place FOR WOMEN. Enquiries to W.L. Workshop, 38 Earlham St, WC2. 836 6081

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Print your ad below in block capitals, one word in each box. Underline any words you require in caps.

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PERSONAL

Photodates, SAE to Dent S.R., 29 Westfields Avenue, London SW13

GAYgirl (26) wants to meet/correspond with similar any age. Lives Sussex. Box no.422

Studio potter, teacher, woman, seeks man companion to share comfortable home and expenses. For mutual support and affection. Kingston area. Box no. 423

Have you worked as a 'temp' or counsellor in an employment agency? Information and anecdotes about discriminatory practices, exploitation and sexism in temporary employment needed for research project. Box no.424.

Nikki Evans. Cost of year's sub to US is £4.44 (seamail) or £8.58 (air-mail)

How were you punished at school, and for what crimes? Write anecdotes and experiences including dates; welcomed by author. Box no.425

English guy wishes to marry American girl. Idea: mutual convenience and understanding. Christian 637 1220

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01-837 7324
24 hour INFORMATION
& REFERRAL SERVICE
FOR HOMOSEXUAL WOMEN
& MEN

BOOKS ETC.

Rising Free, left-wing bookshop, 197 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1. Large selection of radical women's literature with mail order service. Including: VD HANDBOOK 8p, PAMPHLET OF THE FIRST WOMEN AND HEALTH CONFERENCE SHEFFIELD 15p, CIRCLE ONE, a woman's guide to self health and sexuality 80p.

RESEARCH MATERIAL ON WOMAN AND SOCIETY. Enquire for specialist catalogues. TARA BOOKS LTD, Shortacre Park Rd, Winchester, Hants. Winchester 2239.

SAPPHO, the only lesbian feminist magazine in Europe, 40p inc post, 39 Wardour St, London W1V 3HA. Meetings held every Tuesday 7.30pm upstairs room, The Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, London W2, off Westbourne Grove 40p admission for non-subscribers.

Nuclear weapons still threaten everyone—keep in touch with latest developments by reading CND's newspaper SANITY. 10p a copy or £1 a year. Write to CND, Eastbourne House, Bullards Place, London E2

New Design WL Badge 14p (incl. postage). Stop Rape American pamphlet on self-defence for women (illustrated) 26p (incl. postage) from Sisterhood Books c/o 11 Great Windmill St, London W1

Anti-Apartheid News, Journal of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. The only newspaper devoted to reporting the facts of the situation in Southern Africa, and the campaigns being waged internationally against white supremacy. Ten issues per year, annual subscription rates £1.35 UK from 89 Charlotte St, London W1P 2DQ

READ RADICAL AMERICA for in-depth articles by socialist feminists. Recent issues include: Bea Campbell and Sheila Rowbotham on women workers, Paddy Quick on women in WWII factories, Linda Gordon on the earlier birth control movement, Sara Evans on the origins of US Women's Liberation, Ann-Marie Troger on organizing women trade unionists and Margery Davies on feminization of clerical labour. Six issues a year for only £2.50. Send cheques to RADICAL AMERICA, Box 3, Cambridge, Mass., 02140, USA. Back issues available.

PAPER BOOK CLUB publishes experimental fiction, socialist literature. Send £1.00 for year's subscription to 44 Queen's Road, Wivenhoe, Colchester, Essex.

"The Curse" a monthly flood of information from the Free Sanitary Protection Campaign. 25p including post and package. From 59 Lower Union St, Bristol 1.

JOB

BRADFORD WOMENS AID have two vacancies (1) full time worker primarily concerned with children. Salary minimum £2250 according to qualifications/experience. (2) Part-time worker for general administrative duties. Hours and salary negotiable. Box no.426

Woman electrician will do wiring jobs for women at less than professional charges. Write to Sally 54 Broucham Road, London E8

FOR SALE

In Grantham (1½ hrs London) I am selling my house, 2 up 2 down, kitchen and bathroom, outside loo, yard and shed, £3,000; if interested phone (0476) 67248

WANTED

Good second hand stereo wanted—deck and speakers. About £50? Box no.427

WORCESTER: People with small capital wanted to start urban commune. Box no.414.

Please send a large stamped envelope with all replies to Box numbers.

ACCOMMODATION WANTED

Country born and bred woman, 28, child 3, finding concrete jungle a no-go area, wants return to rural/agricultural life. Commune/cottage in return work/rent ideal but open to suggestions. Box no.420

Could we help each other? Female having helped organize projects for peace and children for 17 years needs roof in country (or space for small caravan), worthwhile part-time job (gardening, cooking, child-loving) and space to be with like-minded vegetarian companions. Box no.416

CAREERS WORKER seeks friendly place within 15 miles Accrington, January onwards. Own room essential Allergic to damp or mouldering dwellings. Could pay deposit or retainer. Box no.408

FRIENDLY COUPLE seek room in mixed socialist household. S.E. London. Box no.421

GROUPS

Homosexual/Bisexual women join the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. CHE is your voice—make it louder! Meetings and socials throughout Britain. Send SAE 9x4" to CHE (332), 28 Kennedy St, Manchester 2

WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER CAMPAIGN London Newsletter available bi-monthly. £1.00 annual sub or 10p + s.a.e. to W.W.C.C. 49 Lowther Hill, SE23 1P2. General meetings every 6-8 weeks. Convenor 01-928 4195. For the whereabouts of your local group write or ring 01-690 5518.

KINGSTON AREA new group forming. Phone Elinor 01-949 2596 evenings. S.E. London women's group forming. Anyone interested phone 01-318 1032 or 01-693 1874.

PETERBOROUGH Women's Group welcomes new members. Contact Lyn Boothman, 37 Winwick Place, Westwood.

GREAT YARMOUTH Women's Group meets Mondays 7.30. Phone Heidi Burgh Castle 754

Women's Group in Golders Green area. For details phone 458 6865

We are starting a Women's Group in Shropshire. Please ring Mary Ironbridge 3245 or Helen Northern 446

WOMEN'S GROUP STARTING IN NEWARK contact Jean East Stoke 430

THERAPY

PSYCHOTHERAPY: A group of therapists (of both sexes and including Freudians Jungians and existentialists) has vacancies for individuals or couples at reasonable rates. Free initial interview. 01-935 9666.

PRIMAL THERAPY write Jenny James, Atlantis, Burtonport, Letterkenny, Co Donegal, Eire

Woman psychotherapist (Jungian) now has vacancies in Highgate area. Tel: 01-348 5593 before 10 a.m.

THERAPY & COUNSELLING AT NO COST. The Family Welfare Association is an independent agency offering therapy and counselling to individuals, couples and families, living or working in the Boroughs of Kensington and Chelsea or Westminster. Because it is supported by central and local government there is no fee. All the staff are fully qualified. If you would like skilled help with an emotional problem or simply want to know more about yourself then write or phone for an initial appointment to: FWA, 8 Kensington Park Road, W11. Tel: 727-6683/4.

Info..Odds & Sods..Advice

Women in Management

Recently there have been several letters/articles which have mentioned women in management, and attitudes towards them: I wonder if there are any other women involved in management, particularly personnel management, who are also involved in the women's movement. If there are I would like to get in touch so that we could provide support for each other, work out strategies/policies concerning this area.

I am at present a personnel officer, with two kids at home. I trained as a teacher, but I couldn't stand the responsibility of mucking up kids' education. I have just finished a London University Diploma in social studies, but feeling social work a tenuous area, decided on personnel management where I could function without being neurotic about other people's problems.

Since working I am quite excited about the political possibilities, but have some obvious experiences within the job — as a woman.

Yours,
Elaine
(c/o Spare Rib).



School problem

I wonder if you have any information to give me towards solving a child problem.

Do you know of any 'schools' which are boarding and not the usual run of the mill, mainly concentrating on the arts and dance. Its for one of my children who is over-active and needs a special dance-drama type of outlet. She is 11 years old.

I have been pretty ill and trying to recover but almost impossible with a family (one parent) and no help and advice from the powers that be, only hassles.

With love
Bernice Freeman
York

★ I'm afraid I can't suggest a specific school but I can tell you of some organisations which may be able to help you. One is the Advisory Centre for Education, 32 Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1QY. They will give you personal advice for a fee (their magazine *Where* is published monthly and the annual subscription to it is £5.50 a year).

As you wish to send your child to a boarding school, you should also write to the Independent Schools Information Service, 34 Belgrave Road, Seaford, Sussex.

Because you are a single parent in special circumstances (i.e. recovering from illness, with an over-active child) you may well have a case for your LEA paying your child's boarding school fees. LEA's vary in their attitudes, but it's worth trying.



Induction and Natural Birth

I am trying to write a short dissertation on several aspects of birth, mainly dealing with the feelings of mothers to the child, in relation to the method of birth. To this end, I am trying to get hold of a reading list on birth induction, i.e. where the birth of the child is induced rather than labour commencing naturally, and also information about natural birth, plus possibly statistics on both. I wonder if you could recommend a reading list.

I would also like to get the ideas of women who have recently had babies, whether the birth was induced in a maternity hospital or was a natural birth, perhaps unaided, or born at home, and the feelings of the mothers towards the child in either setting. I would be particularly interested in the views of mothers who have had several children in a variety of different situations.

Yours
Elizabeth Duncan
25a Royal Terrace
Edinburgh
EH7 5AH

★ A lot of research has been and is being done on induction. The Institute for Social Studies in Medical Care are at present doing a study for the DHSS. AIMS, a voluntary organisation devoted to improvements in maternity services, has also been doing a lot of work on the subject. It would be a good idea to subscribe to their newsletter. Write to Barbara Davies, 40 Mendip Crescent, Bedford.

Try writing too to the Patients Association, and talk to your local National Childbirth

Trust teachers who have access to the labour reports of hundreds of women whether they had inductions or natural births.



Women's Directory

I'm collecting information about Women's Groups for Virago's Women's Directory. The Directory will be a woman's guide to everything: the law, health, education, work, discrimination, money, etc; and will include a section on the women's movement all over Britain, which will be an introduction to the movement and a directory of contact addresses so that women can get in touch with groups. The Directory will be a paperback and will be circulated widely so it's a good chance to reach women who haven't had contact with the movement before. I need to know addresses of groups, what you are doing, etc. Could you please send anything you can quickly so we can make the guide as comprehensive as possible. Thanks.

In sisterhood
Mary Lewis
Dumb Toms
Ingleton
Carnforth
Lancs
(0468 61403)



Women in Media

In *Spare Rib* 38 Ann Marx asked if there's a group which monitors the media for sexist material. *Women in Media* doesn't have a systematic media-monitoring programme, but whenever we hear/see/learn of unfair treatment of women in the media we protest loud and clear in whatever manner seems most appropriate — press, publicity, pickets, letters, etc.

Any woman who is concerned about the way women are portrayed by the media is welcome to come to our meetings, whether she works in the media or not. We meet on the last Monday of every month at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (Nash House, 12 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1) at 7 p.m.

Yours,
Tamar Karet
London NW2

Setting up a Women's Centre
The Women's Action Group in Middlesbrough is considering setting up a Women's Centre. Is there anywhere we can get practical advice and information on how other centres are organised?

Yours sincerely
L McDonald
15 Taunton Vale
Cleveland

★ Write to the National Women's Aid Federation, 31 Clapham Rd, London SW8. They are in the process of building up their organisation and are soon likely to be able to offer a lot of help and advice to women who want to set up centres. Ask them to send you the pamphlet called *Battered Wives Need Refuge*, price 30p.

Jean and Sophie, who have been involved in setting up a new women's centre in the Camden area of London, would also be happy to help you in any way they can. You can contact them c/o Camden Community Law Centre, 146 Kentish Town Road, London NW5.





Lawful Wedded Wife

"I find, in the Slave Law of Kentucky, an exact parallel to the law of England for its married women", wrote Caroline Norton in 1854.

Margaret Maison traces the life of this influential woman, and her campaign to reform the laws relating to married women, their children and their property.

From their earnings to their underwear, from their babies to their bracelets, their husbands were their supreme masters. For centuries countless married women in England were cast in the role of passive, penniless sufferers; their husbands owned them, and everything connected with them.

Public protest against this connubial slavery was as rare as it was useless, and parental advice to the daughters of

England always stressed the virtues of meek resignation, silent submission and dutiful obedience to total masculine domination.

But one courageous woman, severely wounded in the marital arena, spoke out loud and clear against the injustice of the marriage laws, and actually managed to achieve changes in legislation.

This pioneer campaigner was Caroline Norton, granddaughter of the dramatist Sheridan.

Born in 1808, she married George Norton at the age of 19. It was an ill-assorted match. Caroline was vivacious, witty, impulsive, affectionate, literary, and of ardent Whig sympathies. George, a Tory lawyer, was coarse, dull, cunning, mean, obstinate and vindictive, with a bullying temper and a roving eye.

The couple led a cat and dog life. The violence of their fights was terrible. As well as fierce kicking, scratching and biting, crockery was hurled, furniture burned and doors wrenched off their hinges.

While Caroline was pregnant, George pushed her downstairs, scalded her with a kettle, threw an inkpot at her and set fire to her papers. In spite of all this she managed to produce three sons, whom she loved deeply.

In 1836 George played his trump card by taking away the three little boys and announcing his intention of divorcing her, with an additional suit against the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, Caroline's old friend, for alienation of his wife's affections.

The case attracted enormous publicity all over Europe. Melbourne was acquitted and the divorce action failed.

George still thirsted for revenge, and was determined to strip Caroline of everything she possessed. Even her jewellery and her books disappeared. For years she never saw her sons.

But Caroline had one splendid weapon in the struggle — her pen. She was already a well-known poet and writer of fiction. She composed innumerable pamphlets and letters — to *The Times*, to the Queen, to the Lord Chancellor.

Unlike so many suffering wives she was highly literate and influential, and she publicised her situation with dramatic intensity. George even got the profits from the sale of her literary work, and she exposed this injustice too.

It was not long before a young barrister, Thomas Talfourd, came to her aid. He introduced the Infants' Custody Bill into Parliament, and it became law in 1839.

Previously the law had favoured the husband absolutely, and even husbands who, in Talfourd's words, were "drunken, immoral, vicious and utterly brutalised", had always had legal entitlement to the undisputed custody of their children from the hour of their birth, as well as the right to debar their wives from all communication with their offspring.

(Unmarried mothers were of course exempt from such laws, but this solitary advantage was heavily outweighed by the harsh moral and economic pressures that drove thousands of them to despair, suicide and infanticide.)

The new law allowed non-adulterous mothers to keep their children under seven, and have access to the older ones. It was a much-needed reform, welcomed by thousands of ill-used women, and it banished for ever those scenes (not unknown in those days) when a baby was torn from its nursing mother by her husband, and handed over permanently to his mistress.

Caroline now hoped for an improvement in her situation but her reward for this achievement was to be called a "she-devil" by the press and to have her name linked with Talfourd's by all the society scandalmongers.

George, cunning as ever, countered by removing the

children to Scotland, where different laws applied. The fight continued, and in 1874 the death of the youngest boy from tetanus, due to neglect by his father's relatives, was a shattering experience for Caroline.

She was sent for when her son became ill, but it was too late. "I found, instead of my child, a corpse already coffined", she wrote.

After this the tyrannical George relented slightly, and she was allowed to visit the two elder boys at boarding school whenever she wished. (Previously the Headmaster had been instructed to turn her away.)

But George still punished her by financial deprivation and harassment. Servants were sent to spy on her, and she was "slandered, tormented and insulted" by her husband and many of his relatives. But Caroline, her spirit still unbroken, fought on. "I do not ask for my rights", she cried, "I have no rights: I have only wrongs."

One of her best pamphlets was *English Law for Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1854), in which she declared, "I find, in the slave laws of Kentucky, an exact parallel to the law of England for its married women."

The fruits of her labour began to appear in the late 1850's. In 1857 the Married Women's Property Bill was introduced into Parliament. Several well-known women who had suffered similarly gave their support to it. One was the famous Mrs. Anna Jameson, art critic, pioneer lecturer and leading figure in the women's rights movement at the time. (She too had married a mean and spiteful lawyer. In her case the marriage was not consummated, her separation allowance was never paid regularly and her husband died an alcoholic, leaving all his money to another woman.) Her friend Lady Byron was also a prominent reformer. (She was the widow of the wild, moody, incestuous poet, whose views on women were notorious: he required of them two qualities only — "beauty and submission".)

The Bill was not passed, but it attracted considerable attention, and it was clear that public opinion was gradually changing. Caroline's triumph came in the Marriage and Divorce Laws Act of the same year.

This provided quite a revolutionary new Bill of Rights for women. Among other things it decreed that the earnings of a deserted wife might be protected from a husband's claim on them (Clause 21). It set up a new court able to direct payment of separate maintenance to a wife or her trustee (Clause 26).

It was largely due to Caroline's persistent efforts that these first firm steps towards female legal status were achieved. Women today have much to thank her for.

Her stormy life had a tranquil ending. She lived to see the new Married Women's Property Bill passed in 1870. She derived great delight from her two grandchildren, who were constantly in her company. George died in 1875, and she married a close friend, Sir William Stirling-Maxwell in 1877, and enjoyed a few months of content in this marriage before her death later that year.

Today she is almost completely forgotten, but she deserves our gratitude, not only for her literary work but also for her courage as a wife and mother, and her championship of all those women who were forced to be silent victims of masculine brutality and tyranny. □

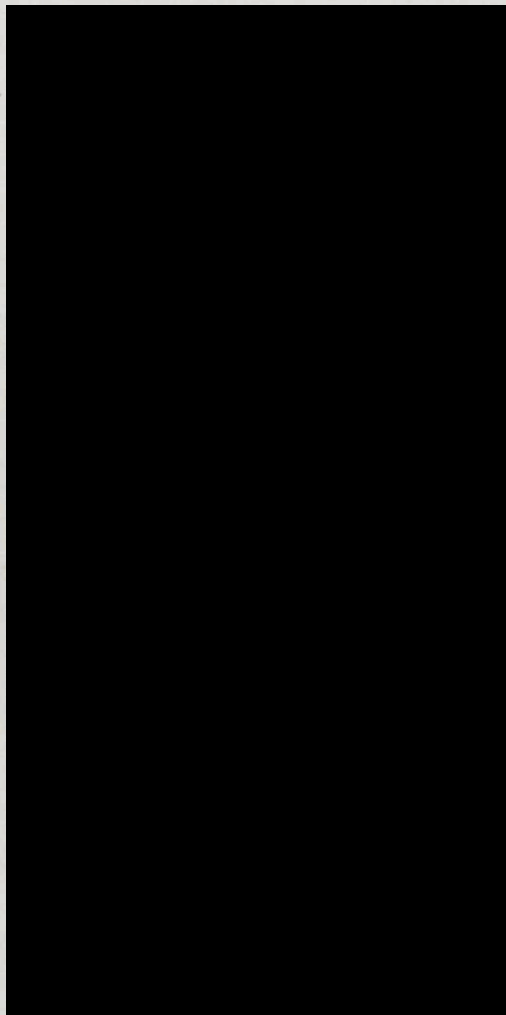
“So long as it's red and going where they're going

Fares in London went up again in November, but the bus service doesn't get any better — what with staff shortages, spares shortages and private cars blocking the roads. We wait at the busstops seething, with no way of resisting the inefficiency and the rising fares. Women have been at the receiving end of our frustration as conductresses since 1951. Now they are driving the buses too.

After one job in a biscuit factory and another in the army, a short stint as a conductress and a whole string of driving jobs, Doris Pitts, a 32 year old Scots Jamaican, applied to be a bus-driver last November. London Transport's original plan was for women to drive only when there was no work for them as conductresses. Then in 1973, after five years of negotiation between London Transport and the Transport and General Workers Union, women were given the same opportunity to drive as men. But London Transport recruits men from outside while women have to train as conductresses first. The union says this is to give women who are already conducting the first chance to apply and train. But there is no date set for an end to this protective period, which obviously stops most women from applying.

So Doris had to do nine months as a conductress first, then reapplied and was accepted. She's been driving for two months now — one of 15 women drivers in London, the only one at her garage in Putney. *Jill Nicholls* asked her about her work:

What do you think of the recruiting policy? My idea is that men should go conducting first too, because then they'd have an insight into the job. I'm driving now and to me it's easy. I know where the busstops are, where the routes go — you can imagine how difficult it must be for someone who's never been on the buses before. For instance, I always stop short of a stop so a conductress has got time to see how many's there and then bring on as many as she wants. If we stop right at the stop everyone's just going to *dive* on. You get to know the routes and believe it or not you know how many's going to get off and on. So if you're busy and you think only a few's going to get on here then you run *past* the busstop. You can work these things out if you've been conducting. I mean it is a team isn't it, you've got to help each other. So I think it would be a good idea for men to conduct first too.



Is that likely to happen? (laughing) No.

Why did you want to go on the buses?

Well, money. There's equal pay so you get a reasonable amount. It's at least a five day week and I'm not making a fortune, but I'm making a lot more than I did on any other job. There's always been equal pay on the buses, but when women had no chance of becoming drivers they were stuck at less. Drivers get £50-55 a week on average. It's different every week according to what shifts you do — sometimes it's more but I wouldn't say it's ever less. For late shift you get extra because they're called unsociable hours. They don't call early shift unsociable, though I do — I hate getting up early. If you work weekends you get more again, time and a half. And they've introduced this new bonus too — you get about 2p in the pound from the fares you collect — that's the driver as well as the conductor. You get more on omos — that's one man buses — but only if you're working as a driver-operator, and they mostly have crews on them now because they're not efficient as one-manners, and the police don't like them. There's no women driving them because it goes by seniority, and we haven't been driving long enough yet.

Do you think it's enough money for the work you do?

I know it's going back to women and men

again, but there's not many women can earn the type of money we can. It's not that you have to have any qualifications either, not as a conductress anyway — just a wee test. As a driver you have to be able to drive obviously. I learned a hell of a lot in the three weeks training.

Do people ever say the work's too heavy for women?

No, I'm a big lassie anyway but it's nothing to do with strength. We're all driving the same buses and if they were too heavy for women they'd be too heavy for men too — it's a difficult enough job with the responsibility and the traffic without it being heavy physically too. In fact I sometimes think it's easier driving a bus than a car because you're high up and can see a situation well ahead of you and the steering is power-assisted — that's if you get a decent one, they're getting a bit shoddy at the moment with the shortage of spares. But if you do get a good bus and a good conductor it's a real treat.

I've been driving a long time, I like to drive and I wouldn't say I was worse than any of the men — in fact I think sometimes better. And they're not going to take just anyone are they. When I say anyone I mean I've seen men with heavy goods licences fail the test, and they've been driving for years and years. London Transport's got a strict standard and if you don't come up to it they don't pass you, no matter how many licences you've got. So you've got to feel proud if you do get through.

Obviously as time goes on you learn to handle the bus better. The first day I went out the sweat was pouring off me, and my nerves! I don't mean they went to such an extent that I couldn't drive, but I felt as though everyone was looking at me. Of course no one even bothers who's up front. So long as it's red and going where they're going they'll get on. When I first went out there was a woman conducting and she was telling everyone about me because she was ever so pleased. In the mirror I could see them all running up to look — the men even, but especially the women — old girls running up and waving to you and saying good for you. But otherwise I don't suppose they'd even have known that I was a woman up there driving. And the woman drivers are so spread out that people say to me they've never seen any.

Do you have the same promotion prospects?

We have now. At one time there were no women inspectors but now women can go through the grade just as men can. They're saying to me “Now you're driving why not go and inspect” but it's not my scene at all, I'd hate it, though you get more money.

Can women do all the same overtime as men?

Yes, it's all the same, it's got to be. If you think you're getting the least bit — what's the word — discriminated, all you've got to do is go to the union.

they'll get on."

How much overtime do you do on average?
A rest day a week, which makes it a 6-day week, and two other chunks. That's all you're allowed by law.

It's a lot of work — are you expected to do that much?
With the staff shortage I suppose they'd like you to, but they can't force you. It's a question of come and go — if you ever want a favour it does help if you're up with them. It's the same with the shifts. There's a fixed rota and if you want to change you have to apply well in advance — it's a bit like the army, everything's got to be in writing. But you can get a mutual exchange — that has to go through the office too but it's automatically granted as long as you've got a replacement. I mean if you ask for an exchange and they say no, then the next time they ask you to do overtime you'll say to hell with it won't you?

How do the shifts work?
Early shift is from roughly 5.30 to 12.30, middle shift from 11.30 to 7.00, late shift from 2.30 to any time after midnight. You have to do seven hours a day, except perhaps on the early shift. I drive the 30s, 14s and 37s. Number one in the 30s is the best job in the garage: it starts at 6.30 and finishes at 10.00. It's something everyone looks forward to because you've got the whole day ahead of you. The early shift on the 14s starts about 5.45 and doesn't finish till 1.30.

If you do early shift and finish say at one then after you've had 40 minutes off you can do another couple of hours overtime. It's no worse than doing a spreadover — that's what we call split shift, when you work so many hours, then have a long break and do some more. Not that I do overtime straight after a full shift. Once I've done my day's work that's it.

Is that because you get tired?
You do get tired, especially on early shift, because you've just woken up and there's the crowds — everyone going to work. With this job you don't get the same days off as weekend as everyone else anyway. Sometimes it's Sunday and Monday but usually it goes Sunday — Monday, then Tuesday — Wednesday, then Wednesday — Thursday. Other times you'll work about 10 days in one go and then have four days off. So you can't really talk about weekends. Your friends just have to fit in with it. If they're in straight jobs, they ring up and ask what shifts I'm on the next week, and I tell them if I can go out. We all do these shifts and we all do overtime, the conductresses as well.

It must be incredibly difficult for women with children.
They must be able to get round it somehow or they couldn't be on the job. I don't have any ties, no husband or children, so there's no big problem for me. A lot of married couples work on the buses and between them

they manage the shifts so they can see the children — though that means they hardly see each other. Let's face it, it's not a very human life on the buses. You get used to the shifts, but when you start it's difficult. You're getting your dinner when you should be eating your tea. The early shift's bad because you do a lot of work before you have your breakfast, and you're starving by then.

Has there been any attempt to introduce childcare facilities at garages?
I've never heard of any. People have to find their own solutions. A lot of women at my garage have been on the buses for years. They might leave for a few years if they get married and have children, then come back when the kids are school-age.

Do you think that one of the reasons more women don't drive is that the shifts clash with their work at home?

It can't just be that because they have to come from the back, and conductresses do the same hours. We won't be able to tell till they start taking women from outside and we see how many they recruit. I think it's because it's a big jump from driving a car — and most women don't even drive cars.

The men in charge were a bit dubious about taking women on at all. After I'd passed my test I was out route-learning and the instructor said they were worried about women because of periods and that. Most women do feel a bit that way, though I don't myself. Then women are inclined to be a bit more temperamental than men, and they took all that into consideration.

And the union men were worried that women wouldn't be active trade unionists. Are you in the union?

Oh yes, everyone's got to be in it, the T&GWU. You can't go against the union and I think it's a good thing in this job.

Are you involved in it at all?

No, not particularly interested. They've got their representative, so if I had a beef about anything I'd probably go and have my say. Every Friday we have to pay our dues, 25p a week in cash. If you've got anything to complain about you tell the official and if he thinks it's worth taking up he'll say so, if not he'll say forget it. They're sort of lawyers really. They know whether you're going to win or lose, whether it's worth the bother. Because it costs them money to take action — it all comes out of funds.

When are the meetings?

I haven't a clue, I think they're every week. It's impossible to arrange them to suit all the different shifts.

Did you join in the stoppage six months ago?

Yes, the whole of London Transport came out in protest when a conductor got killed. That was over a fare, a dog's fare. There'd been a lot of violence on the buses, and you

can't do anything as an individual so they thought, if everyone gets together, even if just for one day, it would be our way of saying that we wouldn't let it happen again.

Has anything ever happened to you?

No, maybe I've been lucky. There's often racial tension in it. London Transport's run by coloureds really — we've only got a couple of coloured girls at our garage, but the men sometimes get abuse. I'm lucky there too because I'm a bit of a novelty, being coloured and a woman and being Scots. Wherever I go people are tickled pink. You do hear stories of kids goading Pakistani conductors and that — it's not nice, but there's not much you can do about it, except clout them round the earhole and then you're in trouble.

It's a real strain conducting in the rush-hours. You feel sorry for people — you know they've been waiting and want to get home, but you can't decide who's jumped the queue. You get the situation where you've let so many on and the bus is full and someone runs along the side and jumps on. I won't let them on. I stop the bus and say get in the queue like everyone else. Of course then they start but you've got to bluff it, you're scared of course but you don't want to start using force against them. So you just stand there and you usually find the public are for you and they start on him and he gets so embarrassed he gets off.

Did you feel the public was against you last time the fares went up?

Well, they moan regardless — if they're not moaning about the busfares they're moaning about how long they've waited for the bus. You just say yes and no — humour or ignore them. I understand really, it just gets a bit monotonous. You've got to tell someone how you feel, and who else can they speak to if not the conductor. If you run out of the garage late or there's a couple of buses missing in front of you, you know fine there's going to be all hell let loose. You stand there posed ready for it.

I much prefer driving to conducting. I didn't mind so much the first time because there was no chance, but once I knew I could I wanted to drive. It's supposed to be interesting conducting because you meet people, but you meet them and all sorts — sometimes you wish you hadn't met them. Anyway you only meet them to take their money, that's all there is to it really.

Did you get any woman-driver jokes from the blokes at work when you started?

No, they were fantastic, absolutely fantastic. I'm a bit quiet at work and when you first go to a garage not many people talk to you. But since I passed I'm like one of the guys. I've never had so many handshakes and cuddles and kisses. Everyone was so excited and pleased — I suppose it was quite an achievement — for myself and for the garage.

I didn't fight to be able to do it. I'm not one for campaigning — for making speeches — though I'll always give my opinion if I'm asked. And I didn't do it to compete with men. I just thought why not do a job you enjoy doing and get paid for it. I believe in all the things women are fighting for — equal opportunity and that — I just wouldn't fight myself. I know people had to push to get women driving the buses, and I'm glad they did. I mean I'm benefitting from it aren't I. □

WORK

Once on a Scottish hillside
he braved the cold
March wind to
climb yet further
and show me the view
from beyond the
next ridge

But the early Scottish dusk
was already upon us
and the cold bit deep
into my body and
all i could think of
was the child
i carried in my womb
and the legs
(weary now after six
months pregnancy)
that refused to
carry me further

And i feared that
i would die
out here
on this lonely
Scottish hillside
like some wind-lashed
defeated animal
who knowing that
she can't go on
lies down
and prepares
for death

And he couldn't understand
my anger
and helpless rage
couldn't comprehend
my refusal to be
moved by the beauty
set out before me.
But then i never
had had his natural
feel for nature
had i?
Never had been
blessed with his
special sensitivity.

c. Angela Hamblin.



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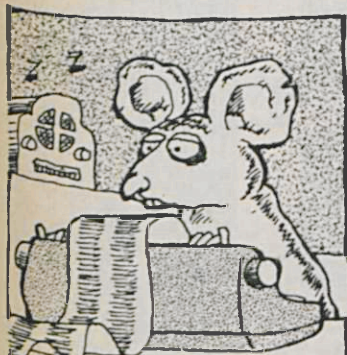
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"Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State" by Friedrich Engels. 192pp. Paper £1.00.

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WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT VIBRATORS

As the first company to introduce vibrators into the U.K. and having sold some hundred of thousands, we feel that we know more about them and their use than most.

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The vibrator is designed and is far more effective when used for clitoral stimulation and its undoubted value for this purpose has been well established by Masters and Johnson in their book "An Analysis of Human Sexual Response." In the book they describe how, using a similar device, they were able to bring to orgasm women who have never before reached a climax.

These were extreme cases obviously. Normally, the vibrator is used to provide extra stimulation during love making and is particularly useful where the woman's response tends to be slow. And, of course, it is just as often used purely for personal pleasure.

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BOOKS

Shoulder to Shoulder A documentary by Midge MacKenzie (Penguin Books, £3.50)

Shoulder to Shoulder is a selection of contemporary material on the militant suffragette struggle for the vote, which formed the background for Midge Mackenzie's television series of the same name. It consists primarily of personal recollections by the Pankhurst family and other members of the Women's Social and Political Union, interspersed with contemporary newspaper and parliamentary reports, but all rather monotonously presented in a large format book with an abundance of sepia photographs.

It is through passages of autobiography that the story of the vote is told, and there is practically no comment by Ms Mackenzie, whose intention is to let the women speak for themselves so that we can appreciate their experience. To this extent the book is successful, it conveys a picture of the excitement, the suffering, and frustration of the struggle; and gives, for example, a valuable description of the move towards militancy, and insight into the dilemmas over the autocratic leadership of the movement and the split with the Women's Freedom League. One is left with an impression of the determination and single-mindedness of the campaigners – as Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence says of Emmeline Pank-

hurst "[a woman] aflame with a single idea which had taken complete possession of her" – and without such force the militant campaign would not have been successful.

In her introduction Ms Mackenzie accuses historians of erasing this militant struggle from the history books, but it seems to me that subsequent historians must be blamed not so much for ignoring the suffragettes altogether, but for concentrating on personalities at the expense of a serious analysis of the political and social position of women. It is now for feminist historians to assess the methods of militancy and to evaluate the importance of the vote in the progress of women's liberation. The words of the women themselves only provide a beginning. □

Catherine Gieve

Lucy and Lucy Runs Away by Catherine Storr (Bodley Head New Acorn Library)

Hands up all 'Famous Five' addicts who found in 'George' (as Georgina liked to be known) a tomboy figure to admire and identify with. My generation's debt to 'George' who embodied a tomboy stereotype that we could copy and thereby find a socially acceptable way to play football, climb trees, wear shorts etc is not to be underestimated – but do girls today still want a tomboy model?

Lucy, or 'Lew, the memorable detective' as she likes to imagine herself, wants to be a boy. She doesn't wear dresses, she collects weapons, she wants to cut her hair short like a boy, and she only wants to play with the boys – who don't want to play with her.

By tracking down some thieves Lucy is at last found acceptable by the boys and she joins their Robin Hood games as Will Scarlett. After all, as the story concludes – 'it's better just with boys'.

Lucy remains throughout a determined, believable person who is still convinced at the end of the story that life would be better if she were a boy. Storr presents her convincingly – her fantasies, her longing to be accepted by the boys, her very real fear when driven off in the thieves' van. Blyton's 'George' was never as real and complex as Lucy.

The problem in choosing this story for children is that tomboys are far from liberated, and a story that concludes 'it's better just with boys' would require some discussion on sex roles which the book does not provide. We are left with Lucy's assumption that there is something intrinsically better in being male.

Lucy Runs Away, the second story in the book can be unreservedly commended as an exciting adventure story about a girl. Lucy saves up steadily and runs away just as she always said she would after her eighth birthday. A welcome addition to the very few stories about positive girls for the younger reader. For 7 yrs and upwards. □

Freedom For Priscilla by Joyce Nicholson (Nelson)

Joyce Nicholson's study of the history of Australia's first hospital for women, staffed by women doctors, led her to write *Freedom for Priscilla*, a novel set in late Victorian times dealing with a young girl's struggle against the conventions of middle class Australian society as she strives to become one of the first women doctors.

At first sight Nicholson's narrative lacks the warm characterisation *Miss Rivers and Miss Bridges* and *A Question of Courage* – two British novels about the suffragette movement. But Nicholson's characters begin to emerge forcefully as the real issues of the oppression of women become clear in Priscilla's struggle to gain a place at school like her brother and later to study medicine.

Although Priscilla's family is a privileged one, Nicholson places them, their attitudes and the social changes going on around them in the context of Australian society of the period – an essentially immigrant population gripped by social mobility.

Clearly Joyce Nicholson is committed to the cause of equal rights and opportunities for women. At the same time her book is a vigorous and dramatic story that will involve the young reader. For 10 yrs and upwards. □

Rosemary Stones
(Children's Rights Workshop)

FILM



An Egg Is Not A Chicken by The Newsreel Collective Distributed by The Other Cinema

The relevance of the slogans that grew out of the National Abortion Campaign (Abortion on Demand, A Woman's Right to Choose, Every Child A Wanted Child) is acutely reflected in the individual experiences of women interviewed in the film, *An Egg Is Not A Chicken*. One woman is given 24 hours to choose; one more child or sterilization? Another woman is refused an abortion by her doctor, has the child, becomes pregnant again, is refused abortion again, goes to a psychiatrist who reassures her that one more won't make much difference. She gives birth to twins.

"One morning, you know, I'm just going to wake up and take them over to the hospital and say they're your responsibility."

This 30 minute film was made by The Newsreel Collective in response to requests from the Brighton NAC to illustrate how women were organizing against the reactionary legislation of James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill. There are demonstrations, pickets, theatre groups, leafletting, to encourage all women to take action, with support from the TUC, BMA and the Department of Health and Social Security. *An Egg Is Not A Chicken* is not only about abortion; it refers to the equally important issues of the cuts in social welfare expenditure, providing an overall picture of the struggle for women's rights and a useful basis for further discussion. □

Laura Margolis

You can hire *An Egg Is Not A Chicken* for £5 from *The Other Cinema*, 12-13 Little Newport Street, London WC2. Telephone: 01-734 8508.



Emmeline Pankhurst 1908

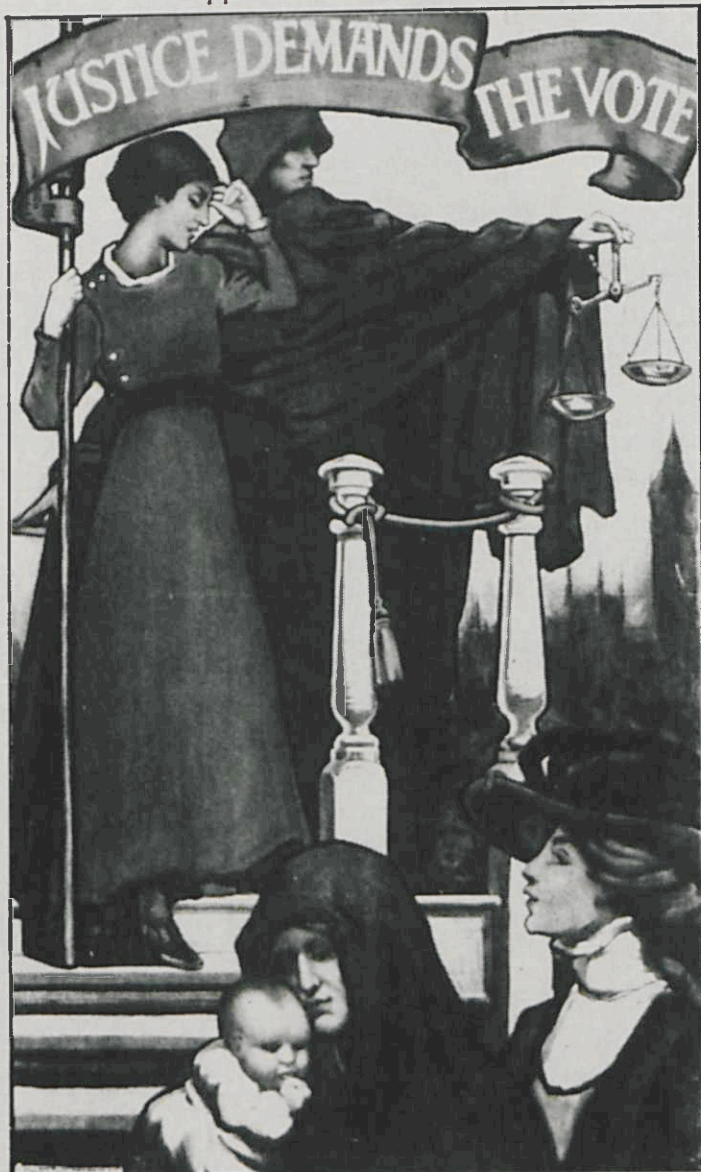


DICK HART

1908 SUFFRAGE POSTER

IN SHADES OF RED & BROWN

*First published by Brighton and Hove Women's Franchise Society
Approximate size 20" x 30"*



Available by Mail Order for £1.00 (p & p included) from
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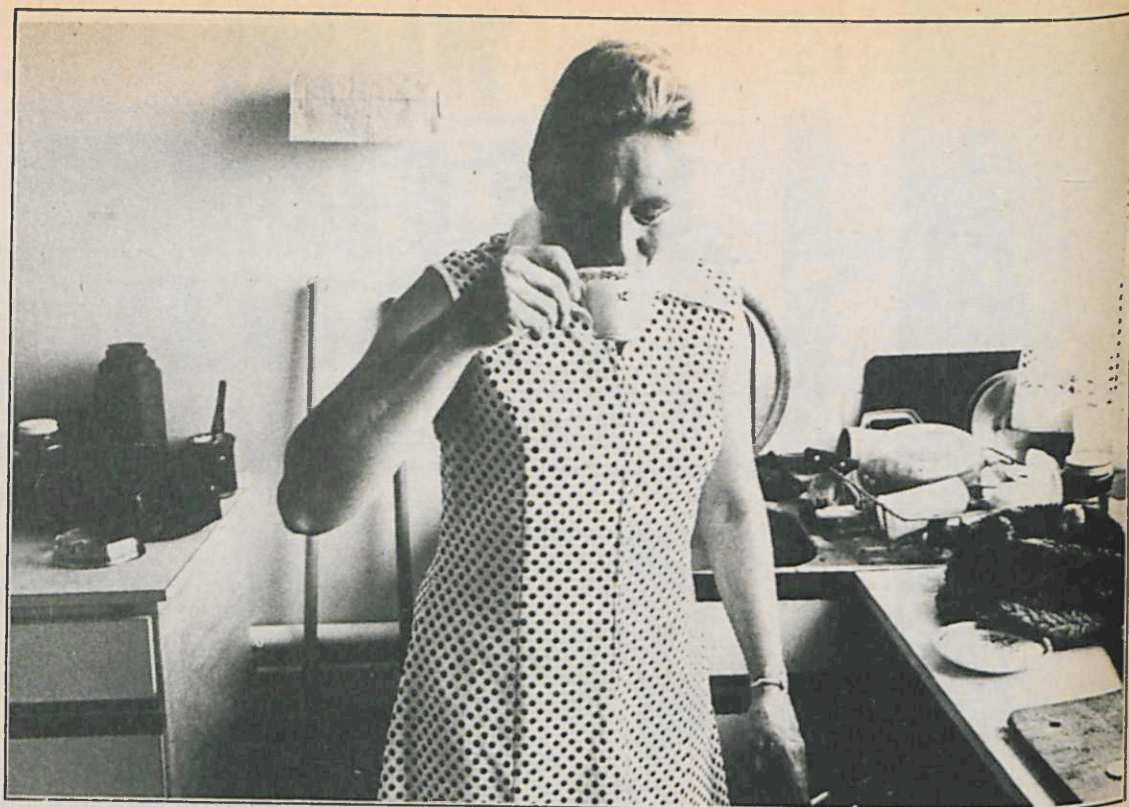
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NAME

ADDRESS

*Make cheques/PO's payable to Spare Ribs Ltd
Please allow three weeks for delivery*

UNIQUE XMAS OFFER



Breakfast

WOMEN WORK IN HACKNEY

The exhibition was divided into different sections, each section representing one kind of work which women are responsible for, each section reflecting the sexual division of labour.

The photographs show women making garments, toys, leather goods and packaged goods; nursing, cleaning, cooking, teaching, typing and writing accounts; doing very similar things both inside and outside the home.

For each section a mass of photographs was displayed with a single handwritten statement of the average women's wage and that of her male counterpart.

The garment industry is Hackney's largest employer of female labour, and it is well represented in the exhibition. The pictures of women sewing endless buttons onto endless clothes prods the viewer to reflect that at least work in the home is a little more varied. However, work in the home is notoriously undervalued. Housework is neither paid nor really considered to be 'work'. The statistics presented with the photographs reveal that in the garment industry the closer you get to the home, the less you will be

paid for the clothes you make.

One group of photographs entitled 'A Day in the Life of...' depicts the life of a woman who has three jobs. She starts the day as a housewife, becomes a lunch supervisor during the lunch hour and works as a teacher's assistant in the afternoon. At night, she continues with the housework.

The section on child care is rather short on photographs. Only nurseries were shown and it is not clear what kind of nurseries they were. Furthermore, the exhibition did not document what happened to the women who could not find nursery places for their children. The 'Hackney Flashers' – the name the women photographers give themselves – are remedying this as they prepare the exhibition for travelling around the country.

The section on women in the trade unions is different from the others. There are no photographs, only tables showing the number of women at various levels in the union hierarchy. Perhaps the photographers thought the lack of high ranking women unionists justified the absence of photographs.

A further section was dedicated to the struggle of women in Hackney for a better life. There were photographs of the activities of the local abortion campaign against the James White Bill and a demonstration of Hackney nursery nurses in their successful campaign for parity with other council workers. It was a great pity that the women pictured in the 'struggles' section tended not to be represented in the work section, and that the women at work were not presented in struggle, as if work were the domain of one group of women and struggle the domain of another. I would like to have seen pictures of women students who

like myself live in Hackney. Community workers, social workers, writers and college teachers were not represented, and there was no evidence of struggle in factories, sweatshops, hospitals or shops.

Although the exhibition was exceptional in its focus on women at work, I think the photographers occasionally fell into the trap of assuming that relevant images are equally accessible. This was true of the section on child care, but it was particularly true of the 'struggles' section. Here, the public side of struggle was portrayed in prints of demonstrations. The more frequent, but less visible side of women's struggle were not shown. For example, when I worked at the Lesney's Toy Factory, I saw that the women were involved in some form of rebellion at least once a fortnight. In winter when the factory was too cold for comfort, the women would stop work and sit at their machines until the heating was turned up. One day when I was late for work, the woman shop steward intervened on my behalf and stopped the management from docking my pay.

It is difficult to portray these events in photographs as management impose constraints on the photographer wishing to be in the right place at the right time. (Lesney's management directed the Hackney Flashers to the packing department, which is the nicest in the factory.) Yet somehow, I feel that this must be possible.

The socialising that occurs at work was also overlooked. This could be easily portrayed, by showing prints of the daily teabreaks, lunch breaks and fleeting interactions.

Yet there were themes of political importance in the exhibition. What struck me was the reminder that

women's collective existence is usually hidden.

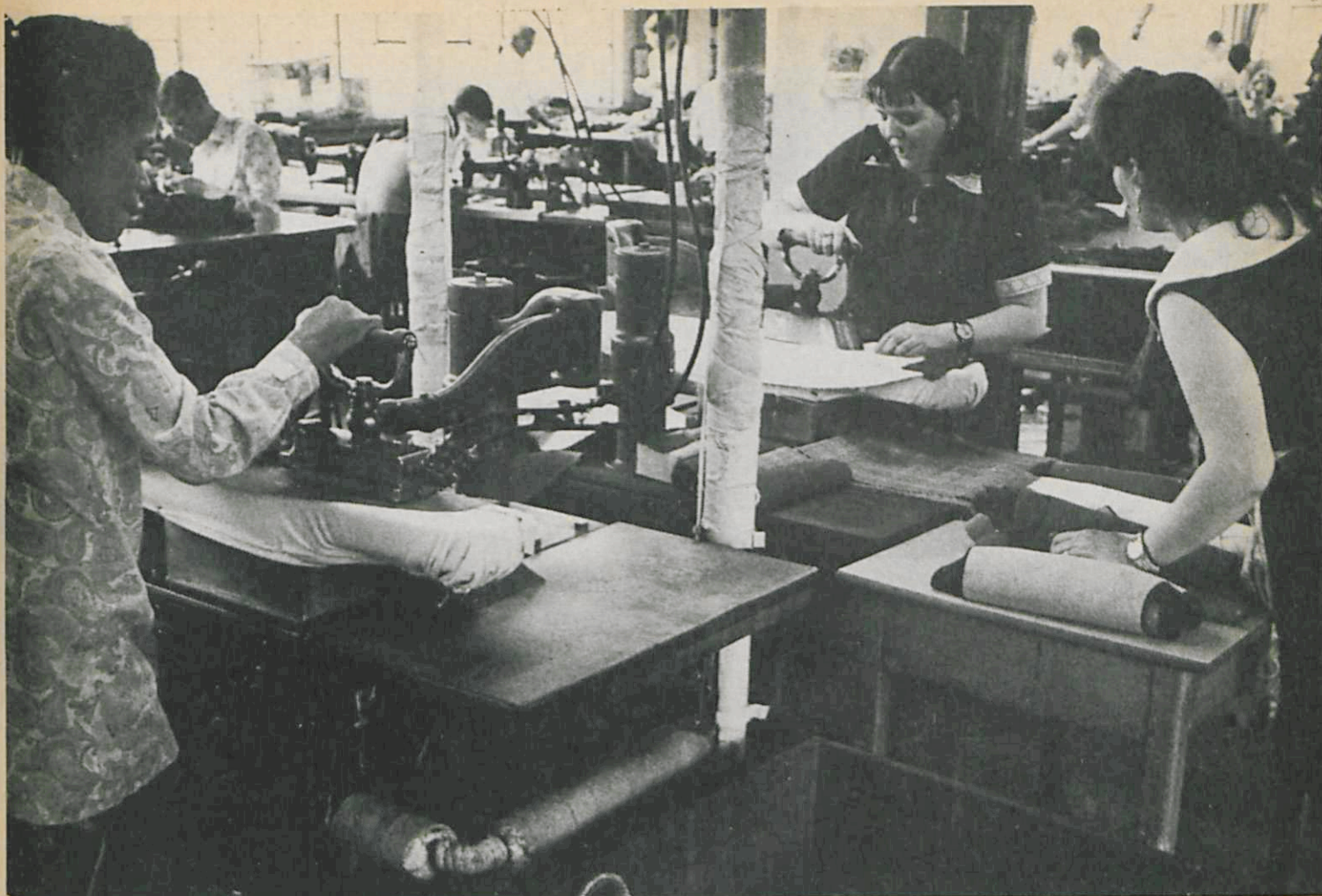
The activity common to all women, housework, is usually hidden "in the privacy of the home". Most people do not know that homeworkers earn as little as 6p per hour, and homeworkers do not usually know they they are earning below half the legal rate for the industry.

We experience a shock when we see this exhibition because the reality we are used to seeing (a male one), is not the one we see in the exhibition, (a female one). This is not a contradiction in terms even though most people who saw the exhibition were women. We know ourselves as individuals, but not as a group. Marks and Spencer demanded to have the photographs of their women employees withdrawn when they saw the photographs in the context of the exhibition; they did not object to the individual prints. The large number of prints (about 250) of women at work was very significant. So was the portrayal of women in groups. Even in political posters where the content is not what we expect eg Vietnamese and African women shown carrying guns, the form is over familiar – women are presented as solitary individuals with expressive faces. In this exhibition, women are shown en masse. Our strength lies in seeing ourselves as a group and acting as such. Until then, there will be no real challenge to the organisation of this society. □

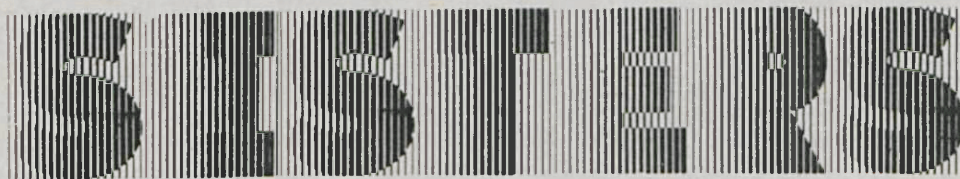
The Hackney Flashers need between £100–£200 to prepare the exhibition for travelling around the country. The money will be used to buy boards to display the prints and to laminate the photos to avoid damaging them.

Send donations to the group c/o Spare Rib.

Cathy Haw



A group of women working in a garment factory



If you are an engineering staff worker

JOIN TASS

The staff section of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers

If you oppose sex discrimination in jobs, in pay, in opportunity

JOIN TASS

Don't let the employers organise you out of equal pay and equal opportunities. Legislation will not be enough.

YOU NEED ORGANISATION NEGOTIATION

As well as legislation.

Write for application, or organise a meeting.

Contact: Judith Hunt, National Womens Officer, Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, Technical Administrative and Supervisory Section, Onslow Hall, Little Green, Richmond, Surrey.



***Salt and Bitter and Good*
Three Centuries of English
and American Women Poets,
edited and introduced
by Cora Kaplan, with
original portraits by Lisa
Unger Baskin
(Paddington Press, £4.95)**

Unlike the United States, British publishing has been slow to acknowledge the recent surge of interest in the hidden history of women's literature. This book makes a welcome appearance, therefore, marred only by its price, which will make it out of the reach of many people until the publishers produce a cheaper paperback – in about a year's time, they say.

Cora Kaplan selects 24 women poets, all no longer living, all substantially represented by a number of poems each, and each prefaced by a short but comprehensive critical biographical sketch.

The introduction sets out to sketch a necessary area of reclamation for literary history – the forgotten or suppressed women who wrote and published poetry, many of whom in their day were accepted members of the then literary milieu. Ms Kaplan makes a number of pertinent comments on the reasons for

this reclamation: the retrospective suppression of women's poetry, as well as a reluctance to accept it in its time as worthy of serious attention springs from male prejudice against women as writers. She gives us enough brief indications of the consistency of this from the seventeenth century to the twentieth, ending with American poet Theodore Roethke's belief that "the central experience of women's lives – and therefore female perspective on the world – are trivial". And in case even we should begin to be smug and think those days of blatant sexism are past, let me refer you to a silly British poet, Ronald Duncan, who reviewed this anthology in *Books and Bookmen*. Castigating its editor for producing the book in the first place, he sneers at her qualifications, her comments, and kicks women up onto a spiked pedestal by simultaneously saying that women own 70% of American wealth (women as controlling haridans), have better things to do with their time than "doodling with words" (only men can be great writers), and anyway write lousy poetry – Plath is "a good minor poet".

Cora Kaplan counters such prejudice by showing that many women were public, political poets – Aphra Benn, Elizabeth Barratt Browning – and by questioning conventional assumptions of what the proper subject of poetry is: "What are the

'real agonies of the spirit' which women supposedly avoided? Are they agonies that only men can experience? Does one challenge God better in a size ten shoe?" Her choice of poetry indicates a slight preference for "poems that deal with women or with the poet's view of nature". She sees women as taking part in a subversive act by definition when they write poetry, even when they accept the dominant male view of poetic form and content. She points illuminatingly to the way this subversion has a conscious moment in some women's use of flower and plant imagery in positive and active ways, in defiance of the way similar imagery is used by men to objectify and passify women as objects in their poems.

Cora Kaplan is frank in her bias, and in the limitations which constrain her in this anthology; she reveals a deep knowledge of literary history, and claims finally that "The recognised existence of a tradition of women poets is as important as any other lost or distorted piece of women's history."

This book brings to light some of the material on which an assessment of such a 'tradition' must be based; it is particularly important that we reconstruct this missing piece of literary history in a way which clearly shows the links between the literature and its socio-economic foundations, and avoid a radical feminist analysis which asserts the autonomy of 'women's culture' as separate from, and above the rest of society. Not that Cora Kaplan herself falls into this trap; but within a particular stream of twentieth-century literary criticism the idea of a literary tradition has been taken to mean a set of values which survive through literature in spite of historical change, rather than as both a reflection and a dynamic part of that change. The use of the word 'tradition' is therefore a loaded one, and as we shift the landmarks of accepted literary history, we must be careful not to substitute one set of prejudices with another. □

Micheline Wandor

***For Their Triumphs and For
Their Tears: Women in
Apartheid South Africa*
by Hilda Bernstein
(International Defence and
Aid Fund, 50p)**

Hilda Bernstein is a white South African artist and author with personal experience of imprisonment for political activity in South Africa; her publisher is an organisation which for many years has assisted the legal defence of South African political prisoners and aided their families. The purpose of her book seems to be threefold: to describe the economic, social and political conditions of South Africa's black majority; to examine in special detail the condi-

tion of African women under the Apartheid state; and to document that state's repression of black women and women resisters in general. The primary focus is on the past: although one chapter is entitled 'Looking Forward', it contains virtually no perspectives for struggle in the future. One can think of various possible reasons for this omission. Perhaps Bernstein did not wish to get involved in a controversy about the legitimacy of violence in a liberation struggle, or to identify herself with a disputed political line; perhaps she merely lacked the necessary information. But whatever the reason, the book is left rather incomplete as a result.

The first three chapters are an anatomy of Apartheid legislation, and the following four describe living conditions for African women and their families. Bernstein's meticulous and unemphatic presentation of horrific realities is excellent, and well organised for the purpose of quick reference. What is particularly admirable is the way she recognises and spells out all three major dimensions of oppression for black South African women – racial, economic (class) and sexual. She brings out their interrelationships without falling into the facile error of 'reducing' one dimension to another (for example, claiming that racial oppression is class oppression *and no more*). Quite rightly, she gives priority to black rather than feminist goals – although she does point out later that women are not yet being allowed to fulfil their potential within the liberation movement.

The last three chapters, dealing with resistance, are less satisfactory. Bernstein tends to universalize the sacrifice and suffering of the victims of oppression, white and black, distributing the names of whites among those of non-whites in a rather emphatic way smacking of special pleading. It is not really for a white writer but for a black one to evaluate the role of women who even in prison cannot slough off their privilege. Perhaps a black writer would arrive at the same conclusion, but Bernstein should not pre-empt it. The 'roll of honour' of imprisoned women at the end of the book strikes an unfortunate note. It has the effect of personalizing the struggle excessively, of subordinating present achievements to past suffering, and even of encouraging sectarian squabbling (for those inadvertently or innocently omitted may suspect other motives). War memorials are for when the war is over.

However, this is a good (and cheap) introduction for the British reader who wishes to know more precisely about South African conditions with some focus on African women. It has little to do (justifiably) with Women's Liberation as ordinarily understood in a European context, or (less justifiably) with the theory and practice of national liberation. But it can be strongly recommended. □

Shirley Talbot

BREAST CANCER SCREENING: a critical guide

The government recently rejected the idea of a national breast cancer screening campaign. *Jill Rakusen*, following up her article on treatment, explains why screening is vitally important to women and how we should insist that women at risk be catered for. She describes which of us are at risk and looks at present screening facilities.

Is Early Detection Important?

All the doctors I talked to are convinced of the importance of early detection, except for one — a pathologist — who feels that it is probably only important in a small number of cases. A London surgeon expressed one extreme: "If breast cancer is caught reasonably early, the woman has about an 80% chance of survival and enjoying a normal life span. If she is caught very early, and the lump is a fairly simple one, her chances are about 95%." The Women's National Cancer Control Campaign (WNCCC) takes a similar view on the treatment of "early" cases, citing an "80% success rate" (by "early" they mean before the lymph nodes under the arm are affected or heavily affected).

At the other extreme we find Ivan Illich, writer of an extensive, much publicised, critique of the medical profession¹. He attempts to show that there is no difference in survival rates between treated and untreated breast cancer. Much as I admire him, I must add that after following up his references I find it difficult to see on what evidence he makes that assertion. There is plenty of evidence to disprove it.

Where is the truth? First of all, it is unrealistic to base an assessment of the value of early diagnosis and treatment solely on survival statistics without considering the important *quality* of survival — which is dramatically improved. The truth also depends on what is meant by the term "early" in "early diagnosis". Some doctors believe that any lump that can be felt is a "late" lump — and it is, biologically speaking.

However, a woman's chances depend on many other factors such as the kind of lump involved, whether it is correctly diagnosed and where in the breast it is located. With some tumours, with or without treatment, the woman would survive for 10 years or a normal life span. With others they might be already so malignant that whatever the treatment, the woman would die within about three years. There are still others where treatment affects survival rate — and here, early diagnosis is of paramount importance.

How is Early Detection Possible?

1. Regular self-examination:² women are better than ordinary doctors at finding lumps in their own breasts. If a woman makes an effort to get to know her breasts, and examines them regularly, she is in an ideal position to distinguish any changes.

2. Clinical examination: detailed and skilled manual examination by trained personnel.

3. At present there are two other screening techniques which form important back-ups to manual examinations. These are thermography (infra-red thermographic examination) and mammography (X-ray). Thermography is a safe and painless technique which involves cooling the skin and with the help of a machine, examining the contours of the breast. Mammography involves a small X-ray exposure. Neither technique is perfect. Thermography can produce a considerable number of false positive results and for this

reason has been found unsuitable for use on the general population. While mammography is particularly useful in detecting lumps in women past the menopause, for other women it cannot apparently do much better than detecting tumours which a skilled manual examination should be able to catch.

However, as both thermography and mammography can detect lumps before they can be felt (at this stage there is the greatest chance of curing the disease), all three techniques of clinical examination need to be available in order that the best results may be obtained.

How to get Screened

Jane Davey, who runs the Well Woman Clinic at the Royal Marsden Hospital, London, believes that every woman over the age of 20 should pay an annual visit to a centre, specialising in the breast screening techniques described above, in addition to examining her breasts every month.

There is no way at present in which a woman can be screened on the NHS if she has no symptoms and no previous history of breast cancer. If she has symptoms, her GP must refer her for screening under the NHS. If a woman has had breast cancer she should be regularly checked and this should be arranged by the specialist in charge of her case. If you are prepared to pay, contact BUPA (address at end of this article).

Is NHS Mass Screening Viable?

The arguments against mass screening are as follows: ►

screening

There would not be enough doctors to go round: yet experience at the Royal Marsden shows that it is not necessary for a doctor to do this work. A nurse, well-trained and well-paid, would certainly be better at it than an untrained doctor.

The expense: one estimate of the cost per examination is about £2.70. It would be interesting to see how a cost-benefit analysis done by female economists, statisticians and medical workers would compare with estimates by the Department of Health. One view, put forward by Gilvray Adamson in the *British Medical Journal*, is that a properly devised system of routine checks could save many lives at far less cost to the nation than present methods, which "often result in treatment being sought too late so that highly trained surgeons and expensive hospital treatment have to be used, often unfortunately to no avail".

Anxiety: it has been estimated that out of every 1,000 women screened in a national plan, five to ten of them would need a biopsy, and 80% of these would turn out to have a benign disease. As the Minister for Health has pointed out, this might well cause unnecessary anxiety to many women. Some women, on the other hand, might be told that they were free from cancer when in fact they were not. This does not seem to be an entirely valid argument against mass screening because technique and expertise are also important factors. In 1973 Caroline Nicholson reported in *Nova* that at least one specialist in screening had reduced her false positive rate to 30% and her false negative rate to 0.1%. Furthermore, she said she would stop screening altogether if her false negative were as high as the 8% of one New York study.

Perhaps it should be left to the woman to decide whether she prefers the long-term anxiety of not knowing or the short-term anxiety of an unnecessary biopsy?

The main argument against mass screening at the moment is that there is as yet no way of evaluating the procedure. Until it is possible to assess the results of such a programme, the government could not give the go-ahead.

In April, the government working party that has been examining the pros and cons of mass screening decided against the idea. If mass screening is not to be introduced, what about the possibilities of selective screening for women at risk?

Who is at Risk?

1. A history of breast cancer on the mother's side. This does not mean that if a woman's mother has had breast cancer, she herself is bound to get it. Heredity is of far less importance than other known risk factors.

2. Age: the risk of breast cancer increases with each decade of life. The majority of cases are over 40; the commonest age range is from about 45 to 60, although the number of cases, particularly in the 35 to 45 age group, is increasing. Breast cancer is the Number One cause of death in the younger age groups (between 25 and 55). As we have seen, Jane Davey feels that all women should

be screened annually, though some people feel that regular screening should only begin after 35. From the figures, it would seem that regular screening should begin from at least 40.

3. A history of benign (non-malignant) breast disease: women who have had benign breast disease do seem to have a slightly higher chance of contracting breast cancer. One textbook suggests that every woman with benign breast disease should be examined at intervals of three to six months. Mammography is also suggested at yearly intervals.

4. Women with no children are also apparently at risk, but it appears that this is because most women with few children have them relatively late. In other words, the relevant factor is the age at which a woman has children: late teens or early 20's are the optimum times. If a woman is pregnant by the age of 20, the risk could be reduced by half. A woman over 35 who has children is in a higher risk group than the childless woman.

5. Women who already have cancer in one breast.

6. Weight: this does not seem to be an important factor, although women with larger breasts could be slightly more at risk.

7. Breast feeding: in itself does not seem to have any effect either way, although Dr Gilliss feels that "Women who breast-feed their babies for a comparatively short period (up to six months, say) have a slightly better immunity to breast cancer than either those who do not breast-feed at all, or those who breast-feed a child over a very prolonged period."

So, some women are considerably more at risk than others. It would seem reasonable to hope that all women at considerable risk and with suspicious symptoms could expect to have facilities available to them. This is not the case.

Screening Facilities Available Now

The present situation was highlighted by Joyce Butler MP in the House of Commons during November 1974. She pointed out that considering breast cancer is four times as common as cervical cancer, there are surprisingly few facilities for breast examinations. In England, compared with 573 cervical smear clinics, only about 66 counties and boroughs arrange for breast examinations. In some cases, no facilities are available during evenings. For instance, although the health board for Greater Glasgow has 13 clinics with facilities for cervical and breast cancer screening, none of them is open during the evening. Ms Butler said, "It has been estimated that we need about 30 of the early diagnostic clinics throughout the country. That compares with the half dozen or so we actually have."

Furthermore, Ms Butler has discovered that many GPs to whom women go for advice seem unaware of the diagnostic facilities available in their area. She cited disquieting evidence from personal reports that many GPs are "somewhat off-putting, to put it mildly, when asked by women about possible breast cancer symptoms." One thing

she did not do was to bring into question their competence to deal with symptoms if women were single-minded enough to force uninterested GPs to examine their breasts. Lin Layram's experience (see *Spare Rib* 37) is by no means unique. In the weeks I have spent researching this article I have heard of two people whose doctors told them not to worry; the women insisted on further tests, which proved that cancer was present.

The Attitude in Family Planning Clinics

One woman described practically having to force the FPA clinic doctor to examine her breasts — and when he finally did, he obviously had very little idea how to do it. Another woman who has been going to the FPA for the Pill for many years has never had her breasts examined.

On being asked about the training of FPA doctors in breast examination, the Medical Director told me that this was part of a doctor's normal training. I asked him what the official policy of the FPA was. Apparently breast examinations are routine in some clinics; it all depends on the clinic. It would be useful for women's groups to find out what the policy is in their area. As all clinics do regular smear tests, there seems to be no reason why they can't at least do breast examination and encourage women to examine their own breasts.

As for the Pill, the Medical Director said that the FPA provided a well-woman service — although he feels that such a service is no more important for women on the Pill than those off it. In any case, as we have seen, women whether on or off the Pill do not necessarily have breast examinations. There is a body of opinion that the breasts of women on the Pill particularly require constant monitoring. Jane Davey certainly thinks this is important, as it is for women on long-term hormone replacement therapy (see Ian Burn's comments in *Spare Rib* 32).

The picture as far as the FPA is concerned seems to be that unless clinics do routine examinations, the responsibility falls on women to ask for them. So women who do not know about breast examinations, or who do not ask for them, feeling diffident or not wishing to take up too much of the doctor's time, etc., simply miss out.

It is important to remember, when evaluating the FPA's contribution to cancer prevention, that it does not deal with a representative sample of women. Family planning clinics only see heterosexual women and women of childbearing age — although some do a screening service alone for a fee. Then the women they see tend to come from the "upper" social groups, and while statistically breast cancer appears to be more common in these groups, cervical cancer does not.

The Women's National Cancer Control Campaign³

Its work backs up NHS and FPA facilities. It has four mobile screening vans which visit factories, shopping centres, GP's group practices, health centres and housing estates. Time permitting, they do breast examinations as well as cervical smears, but the breasts are only examined manually. So although the WNCCC does excellent work in

getting to the women at risk from cervical cancer (send to them for a free leaflet about it), the breast examination is not as comprehensive as that of a fully-equipped diagnostic clinic. In any case, with its limited number of vans and staff, its actual screening work, while essential, is not much more than a drop in the ocean.

What about the National Health Service?

The Department of Health (DHSS) is currently running a pilot survey to see if mass screening for breast cancer would be worthwhile. In the meantime, it started giving the WNCCC an annual grant of £20,000 last year. The Health Education Council gave £4,000. The grants seem small when the WNCCC is effectively doing the Department's job, and when seen in cold economic terms, the potential return to the nation of more of this type of investment must be enormous.

In November, Joyce Butler asked the Minister of State at the Department of Health (David Owen) whether he would implement one of two improvements. She suggested that the DHSS should circularise all GPs, alerting them to the urgency of early detection of breast cancer, and informing them of the diagnostic facilities in their area. (Perhaps she should also have suggested that guidelines re. examination should also be circulated?). She also asked the Minister to consider launching a campaign at the over-50s and preferably the over-45s to have a routine examination, and to consider financing the provision of self-examination

leaflets.

In his reply the Minister said that clinical examination was widely available — which contradicted Ms Butler's own statements. He felt that there were "resource" problems attached to the screening of the over-50s, (note, not the over-45s or 40s), and he was awaiting the reports of the government working parties on breast screening. He went on to say that any woman with the slightest suspicion of symptoms should consult her doctor without delay. How could Dr Owen be so unrealistic: Ms Butler herself had previously given evidence of doctors' attitudes.

Although the breast screening working parties finally reported that it was not at present justified, they did make some constructive recommendations. They suggested that research on screening should be extended and that treatment services should be improved: "the feasibility should be examined of substantial investigations of breast cancer screening (including assessment of benefit) designed and controlled to give the maximum amount of information and to lead to progressive development of a national service if results were favourable". The Minister decided to accept this advice and to establish screening trials "as soon as possible".

While the idea of mass screening is being assessed, we should still make sure that women at risk are catered for. Women's groups can investigate this, publicising their findings and sending them to the Minister and to Joyce Butler.

It is worth bearing in mind that BUPA — the private insurance agency — believes that

women should insist that breast screening becomes at least as available as cervical screening. BUPA does have a vested interest; it provides facilities and charges for them. However, it is widening its facilities and does not appear to be suffering from a shortage of customers, even at £18 a time. One law for the rich? . . . □

References

1. *Medical Nemesis* by Ivan Illich, published by Calder and Boyars.
2. See *Spare Rib* 37 on how to do breast examination: this is a survey of the best leaflets available. For a more detailed explanation I recommend (with the few reservations expressed in *Women's Report* Vol 2/6) *Breast Cancer Self Examination*: an aid to early detection, published by BUPA Medical Centre Ltd., Pentonville Road, London N1 and Medicine Ltd., 58 Russell Square, London WC1
3. WNCCC, 9 King Street, London WC2 (01-836 9901).

Breast cancer is by no means the commonest fatal disease among women. Out of all female deaths:

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| breast cancer | accounts for 4% |
| respiratory diseases | account for 13% |
| strokes | account for 17% |
| coronary disease | accounts for 22% |

(Minister of State for Health, quoted in Hansard, November 1974).

There are, however, about 20,000 new cases per year; about one woman in 17 develops the disease and over 11,000 women in the UK die from it each year. Half the women who die are under 65 years old and the number of cases, particularly in the 35 to 45 age-group, is increasing.

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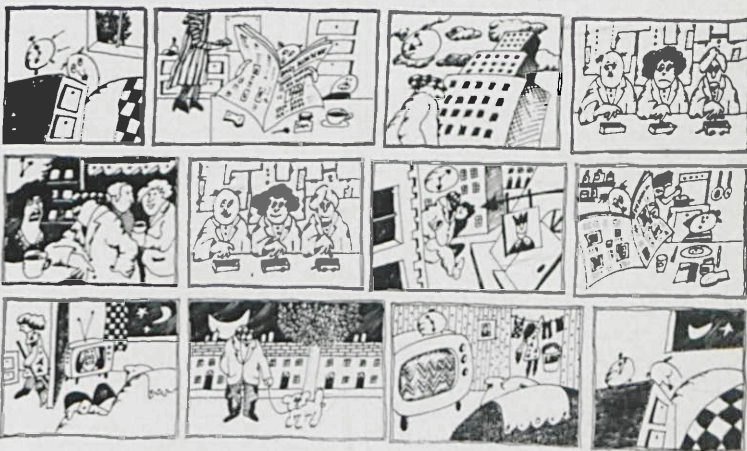
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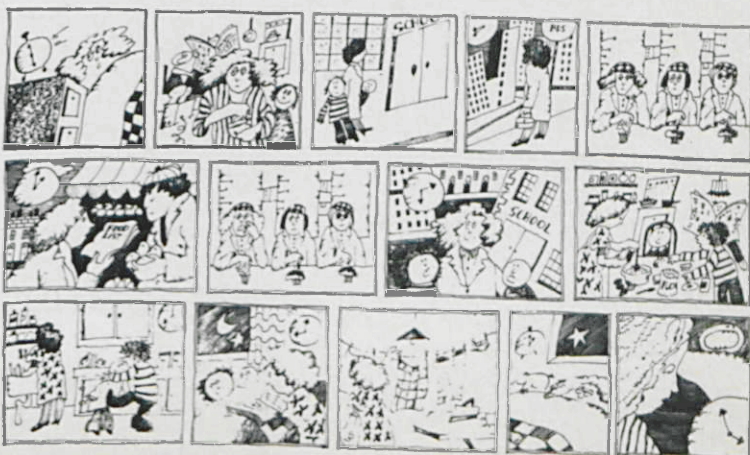
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SOME PEOPLE HAVE TWO JOBS



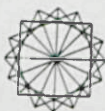
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Peroxide Politics

& THE
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REVOLUTION

THE CHART SUCCESS OF TAMMY WYNETTE'S *Stand By Your Man* and *D-I-V-O-R-C-E* is not a freakish aberration, not some kind of throwback to an earlier stage in the evolution of popular music, which we can smile at tolerantly and dismiss as the last of a dying breed. She is instead the figurehead of the counter-revolution, a glittering peroxide testament to White Womanhood and the homely virtues of the nuclear family. She is both a symbol and defender of the traditionally conservative Middle American way of life, spearheading the inevitable backlash to the Women's Movement. The protest movement of the sixties used popular music as a vehicle for conscious political comment, and now Nixon's Silent Majority is doing the same, and its voice is Tammy Wynette.

Country music has always had a fairly rigid but probably unconscious political framework, being concerned to foster a peculiar brand of new 'traditionalism', which filled the voids in American history with a mixture of romanticism, religion and epic heroism. The old style country singers, like Hank Williams, were concerned with moral issues of a quaintly Victorian nature; the eternal struggle of Good and Evil, the pioneer spirit of man against nature, the enduring purity of true love, the beauty of women and the chivalry of men. It has never been over subtle, treating complex issues very simply and in very black and white terms. Country music has always portrayed an illusory society and life, speaking of the American Dream that all good Americans believe exists somewhere 'over the hills' or 'at the end of the rainbow'; it has set, in fact, the John Wayne ethic to music.

But in spite of its sledge-hammer approach and its grandiose seriousness, old style country music had an open-ness, a vision of hope and a sense of human, or to be more accurate, 'masculine dignity'. Hank Williams' *Beyond the Sunset* is unreal, laughably extravagant in its view of romantic love, but I have a grudging admiration for the dexterity with which romance, religion and epic heroism are contained in one lyric:

*Should you go first and I remain for battles
to be fought . . .
Beyond the Sunset, when Day is Done
When with Our Saviour, Heaven is Begun . . .
In that Fair Homeland, we'll know no
Parting . . .*

etcetera, etcetera. Country music has always had this cliché-ridden morality. It transplanted the heroic tradition of classic literature in the saddle of Middle America, where men learnt to be men and women learnt to admire. It is not surprising that Pat Nixon's favorite music is country.

However, as the guitar-pickin' hobo tradition of the Depression fades further into history, the music of Middle America has become more suburban, more concerned with extolling the virtues of modern middle class life than with the grander pseudo-classic themes of Hank Williams. The music, as opposed to the lyrics, has preserved its epic influences, sweeping its audience away on an orchestrated climax of strings, to the utopian home on the prairie, where love conquers all, God's in His Heaven and all's well with the world. Lately, country music has become primarily a celebration of Nixon's America, with its emphasis on conformism, respectability and religion.

Central to the idea of Nixon's America, and to Nixon personally, is the idolised pedestal image of women, the sanctified role of Wife and Mother:

*There is no undertaking more challenging,
no responsibility more awesome than being
a mother - Richard Nixon.*

This pedestal image is a central theme in country music, where White Womanhood is raised higher and glows more brightly in her aura of emotional pseudo-religion than anywhere else. Womanhood is packaged, promoted and sold not only as the most fulfilling occupation, but the *only* occupation for women. Stuck up on the pedestal, out of harm's way, Woman is defined totally by her man. 'He', the all-American Male is the reason for woman's existence, as any female country singer will tell you. From Sandy Posie's *Single Girl* who 'needs a sweet loving man to lean on' to Connie Smith's 'You've got me right where you want me and I want to be right where I am' the message is the same; what keeps women going is the urge to first get a man and then struggle to keep him, and her happiness in life is dependant solely on how successful she is at doing it. Neither is it only women singers who are busy promoting the WASP image of women - Jerry Lee Lewis sings particularly smugly about his faithful

woman who, in spite of drinking, infidelity, abuse and sheer neglect 'still comes around to love what's left of me'. The passive faithfulness, the mindless ecstasy over trivia that characterise the country music heroine are all too familiar to any reader of women's magazines - what is surprising is the extent to which country music in general and Tammy Wynette and Billy Sherrill in particular have distilled this image down into such a heady intoxicating brew. Women have suffered the onslaught of anti-feminist propaganda before, particularly in the fifties when everyone, even Adlai Stevenson, was preaching the virtues of fecundity and the sin of ambition. Yet none of that had the emotional power of country music. The written word could never approach the seductiveness of well orchestrated strings, Adlai at his best failed to capture the essential warmth and security that a good country singer has as stock in trade. The defining characteristic of country music is not the steel guitar or the emotional hiccup, but its singularity of purpose. Everything about a good country track is designed to achieve a simple, maximum effect. There are no subtle undercurrents, no complex riffs, no equivocation. The threads that are there are ruthlessly woven into the same Gordian knot, littered with roses and surrounded by happy laughter and pattering feet. It conjures up an arcadia of simple pleasures and warm security, and no one is more successful at summoning this vision of paradise than Tammy Wynette and her producer and mentor, Bill Sherrill.

They are more important, more dangerous if you like than Loretta Lynn or Sandy Posie because Tammy Wynette is more popular, more successful and more single-minded than other country singers. One of the main reasons she is more popular is that on record at least, she is better at fulfilling country music's image of White Womanhood; from her immaculate blonde hair to her imploring voice, she's all that a Southern Gentleman ever wanted of a wife and mother, and that, after all is what White Womanhood is about.

Tammy Wynette has the comparatively rare ability to breathe life into the well-worn clichés of Middle America and to make records that are both musically and politically consistent and uncompromising. Her voice blends so perfectly with Billy Sherrill's production, her distinctive whining hiccup matching the plaintive tones of steel guitars and whispering strings. They combine to produce a total effect in a way that no other singer/producer pairing has achieved - and it is no small achievement. The material they've recorded together is an example of excellent production - you may well not like the overall effect, but it does precisely what Wynette and Sherrill want it to do, without distractions and with a confidence and assertiveness that denies argument. At times it almost has the strength of religious fervour as it promotes and celebrates the fantasy heroine of suburbia, protected and reinforced by Heaven prescribed sex roles.

The artifact of 'Womanhood' that Wynette and Sherrill have manufactured between them, the Woman Tammy Wynette is supposed to be for her public, is totally unreal and illusory. 'She' has nothing in common with any woman who ever lived, nor does she describe even a small part of what women are really about. White Woman-

hood is simply a moralising blueprint, and its religious overtones are well-used to bully women into trying to live up to the impossible model held before them. Tammy Wynette's performances on stage fail because the implausibility of the entire Womanhood concept makes her appearances embarrassing.

She trips, very blonde and pinkly plastic, on the stage, full of sweet smiles and meaningful gestures, but instead of conveying the frilled femininity she intends, her image is remarkable brittle. Even the ex-Jones Boys seem to find her slightly ridiculous as she teeters on a high stool, struggling to look comfortable on her pedestal. I found it distinctly unpleasant to watch her attempting to conform to Sherrill's image — it was all so desperately contrived, particularly her attempts to communicate with the women in the audience. Then she managed to fill the theatre with an atmosphere of twee togetherness, a secret society dedicated to its own subjugation. But I don't want to imply that Tammy Wynette is a hapless half-wit to Sherrill's Svengali — there's a definite hardness amongst the embarrassment of these live performances that belies the sweet sentiment of the music, a glittering dollar sign behind the smiling teeth. However the fact remains that the plastic persona she tries so hard to wear on stage has little to do with her hopes and aspirations and a lot to do with Billy Sherrill's version of archetypal male fantasies.

Though the characteristics of this fantasy woman are well known to us all, it's worth looking at exactly how the image is built up, not only to wonder at the single mindedness of its propaganda, but also to understand the power of the enemy. Predictably enough this artificial woman is about as exciting and positive as a dish cloth. Her defining attributes are mindless passivity and total dependence. She revels in her inability to do anything but gawp, cling and adore her man:

*He's my ivory covered tower
And I'm his clinging vine
(That Man of Mine)*

Her passiveness and total lack of identity do not irritate or annoy as they would in any real situation, they are instead great virtues; she's infinitely malleable and all the average red-neck has to do is mould her to suit his requirements, a process she is only too eager to undergo — 'Take me and make me your kind of woman'. The male ego is not threatened at all by such a non-person, which is precisely why this fantasy figures so large in country music, a woman like that makes a John Wayne of every man. She is the stuff that dreams are made of, that all-giving, non-demanding amorphousness that promises the security of total unquestioning acceptance. She is defined exclusively by her man and her existence is centred solely on him. She is child-like in her dependence on him, trusting to his view of the world and luxuriating in his protection like an infant.

*He treats me like a baby all the time
(He Knows All The Ways To Love)*

*Take my hand and guide me
(Make Me Your Kind Of Woman)*

*He holds me in the palm of his hand
And I like it.
(My Man)*

Only a man could really believe that last assertion of mindless dependence. 'Though we may be momentarily seduced by the simplicity of such a relationship, no woman is masochistic enough nor so blind to the realities of her life to think that a situation like that is either plausible or desirable, but that feminine dependence is vital to the masculine American Dream.

That feudal relationship, with women delighting in their serfdom serves to underline the importance of men. If she only values herself in terms of her relationship with him, he must be very important, to one person at least.

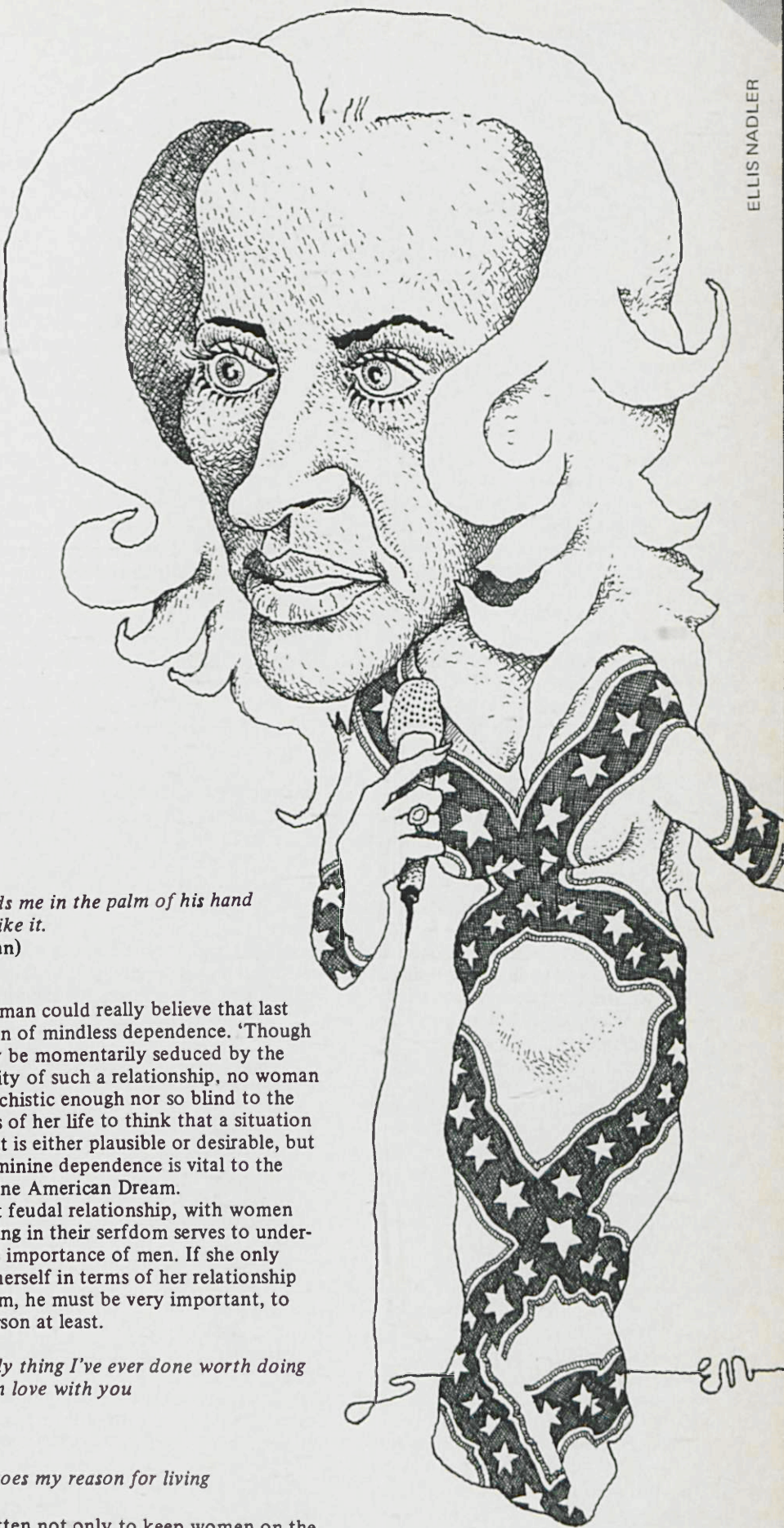
*The only thing I've ever done worth doing
Is fall in love with you*

and

There goes my reason for living

are written not only to keep women on the straight and narrow, but also to reassure men of their own importance. But in Tammy Wynette's material the all pervasive moralising is directed almost exclusively at women. It is incredibly Victorian, stressing the absolute necessity of staying faithful to

your man, and though she is allowed, surprisingly, a certain coy sexuality (e.g. What my thoughts do all the time), she is not allowed to let it get out of hand. 'Almost Persuaded' is a laughably naive seduction, set in a 'bar-room' and it is a classic of



reactionary morality, where smooth talking and alcohol almost entice her away, but virtue triumphs, and at the last moment she catches sight of her 'wedding band' reflected in his eyes and is saved from the proverbial fate worse than death. It could all have come straight out of a Victorian novelette; the association of alcohol and sin is very Dickensian and predictably one-sided. Even excessive drinking in men doesn't carry the moral stigma that attaches to any woman who drinks, no matter how little. It seems to have for women the power of Dr Jekyll's magic potion, transforming her from good wife to bar-room tart at the first sip:

*I'll even learn to like the taste of whiskey
In fact you'll hardly recognise your wife
(Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad)*

threatens Tammy with that pathetic naiveté and little girlishness which is essential to the pure untainted image of the pedestal heroine, and nothing must detract from that image. The sanctity of Womanhood and its ultimate expression, Motherhood, must remain intact, to be revered and worshipped by Nixon's Silent Majority.

Country music has reserved some of its more excessive and nauseating lyrics to celebrate the ecstasy of fertility, that is, Motherhood:

*See our baby on the swing
Hear her laugh, hear her sing,
Knowing that she came from me
Fills my heart with joy to be
A Woman.
(Joy To Be A Woman)*

And all this against a background of sweeping strings and wailing steel guitars. It is not the most subtle of Sherrill's productions, but it is one of his more obviously propagandist.

Another banal monument to the middle class ethic is *With Child*, which if you've got a strong stomach deserves more than one listen, for Tammy Wynette's voice is at its heart-tugging best, being brave in spite of her loneliness, humbly proud of her noble (biological) destiny and supremely unaware of the ridiculousness of the lyrics.

*Our friends came by last night and gave a
shower,
The tiny clothes were all the latest style,
The bootees you should see,
They'll fit him to a tee,
Our friends were proud to know that I'm
With Child.*

*My prayer is that you'll soon be home
And that this child in me is strong,
I'm lonely, but I'm proud to be With Child.*

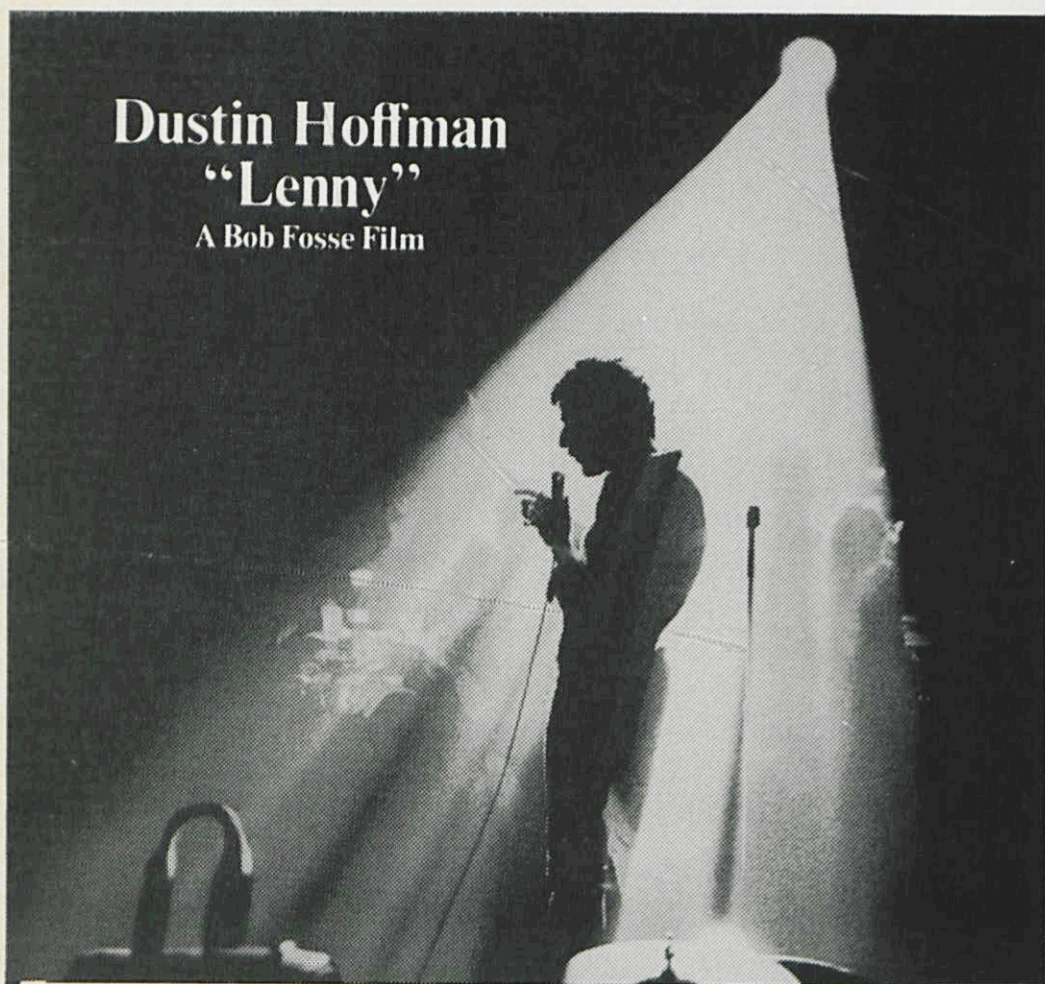
She manages to sing about baby clothes with an intensity of emotion that most of us would be hard put to summon up at the Last Judgement, let alone a suburban shower party.

But the ability to treat that sort of trivia as if it were a religious conversion is the particular Wynette/Sherrill success. They have made the defence of middle class values and woman's traditional role in particular an heroic battle in the best classic tradition, identifying anyone who wants to be anything more than a simpering identityless kewpie doll as the evil force attacking the sanctity and security of the nuclear family and west civilization. *D-I-V-O-R-C-E* and *I Don't Wanna Play House* show the horrors that await any woman who fails to make a success of her marriage. She will be racked with guilt as she watches her innocent children, miserable and bewildered, cast into a limbo of shame, without standards or guidance. Above all, she will be overwhelmed by her sense of failure. And for those women who are misguided enough to think that they actually want something other than what God planned for them, there is the dismissive pity reserved for the irrevocably damned:

*Some women can't understand,
There's more than one difference between a
woman and a man,
And that's the way God meant it to be,
So love me, and don't liberate me.
(Don't Liberate Me)*

By Sue Tyrrell

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A Marvin Worth Production
A Bob Fosse Film

Dustin Hoffman "Lenny"

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